

S T E R N E

A STUDY

Works by the Same Author

BOLINGBROKE AND HIS TIMES

BOLINGBROKE THE SEQUEL

DISRAELI A STUDY IN PERSON-
ALITY AND IDEAS

BEACONSFIELD A BIOGRAPHY

EMMA, LADY HAMILTON

SHERIDAN (IN TWO VOLUMES)



LAURENCE STERNE

From the Original Oil Painting (in the possession of
Theodore Blake-Wilson, Esq.)

STERNE

A STUDY

BY

WALTER SICHEL

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE JOURNAL TO ELIZA

There is a fatality in it —I seldom go to the place I set out for "

Sentimental Journey

LONDON

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE

14 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1910

TO
LADY STRACEY

It adds something to this fragment of Life

STIRNET

PREFACE

STERNE'S Archbishop of Benevento abridged a treatise which had employed fifty years of his life to the sheet-size of a Rider's Almanac. The prelate set a good example, which I have tried to follow. But miniatures of big subjects, if they are to be adequate, involve the compass of larger portraits. The outlines can be reduced, but not the quintessence of character.

This book is a study. It seeks to interpret the problem of the man, to vitalise him and his companions. It does not pretend to be a formal biography, though new facts, as well as old, pervade it.

More than anyone, Sterne demands this treatment, for the romance of him seems only half alive. Professor Cross's careful volume supplies many aids, but much also has been missed. It is striking that no biographer should have yet realised that Mrs Sterne was Mrs Montagu's cousin, or have tracked the lights cast by that celebrity's correspondence on her and on Sterne himself. These enable us to make Sterne's wife a speaking figure, while they help to explain her husband. So with Catherine de Fourmentelle, the "dear, dear Jenny" of his *Tristram*, which holds persistent traces of her elusive presence. From other neglected clues too (however slender) she has been reconstructed here. So again with Mrs Vesey, the belle of the blue-stockings. Sterne's devotion to her began far earlier than has been

supposed, and many a hint has escaped notice. So, once more, with Sterne's known letters, which have been left dishevelled, but are now related to their times, circumstances, and psychological bearings. And in Sterne's books themselves much of significance has been overlooked. Everywhere I have striven to make his voice, and still more his accent, audible. His temperament was his art, and in an unknown letter he told Garrick that his works were a picture of himself. In presenting his nature I have dwelt on features hitherto unperceived. His unnoticed "Reverie of the Nuns" supplies the key to an organisation so dreamily self-centred that the outside world seemed merely its counterpart.

Fresh matter assists these pages. The full meaning of Mrs Draper's long communication to Mrs James (in the British Museum) may be so considered. Two important letters, printed years ago in the *Archivist*, are now utilised with others. Three or four new autograph letters have also proved serviceable, while the entire "Journal to Eliza," transcribed at the end, speaks for itself.

At least five of the portraits are of new impression. The crayons of Sterne and his wife by Francis Cotes, the fine presentment of him in youth which forms the frontispiece, the characteristic one from a rare engraving that corrects Reynolds's delineation, and another taken during his Italian journey, will be of novel interest.

My best thanks are due to Mr Blake Wirgman for permitting his picture to be reproduced, and to Mr Vincent O'Sullivan and their owner the Rev. G. W. Blenkin, Prebendary of Lincoln, for enabling me to present the likenesses of Sterne and his wife which Nathaniel Hawthorne paid a pilgrimage to see. And, further, I am much indebted to Mr H. H. Raphael and to Mr Broadley for allowing me to use the letters in their possession.

PREFACE

1X

Sterne created signal characters. In his detachment and emergence, his pathetic irony and humour, he is modern. So in style. He has handed down a succession of widespread influence. He was a master-impressionist, and an arch-Bohemian. His true home is a fantastic inland, the great highways of literature lie outside it. "For Bohemia (cried my Uncle Toby) being totally inland, it could have happened no otherwise."

WALTER SICHEL

January 1910

ADDENDUM

P 141, fifth line from foot of page—"Descended to Bowood" and "through the statesman" are mistakes. The portrait was bought by Lord Holland, and acquired, at the sale of his pictures in 1840, by Lord Shelburne's son, the third Marquis of Lansdowne, for the sum of five hundred guineas. It is now at Lansdowne House. Lord Ronald Gower in his *Joshua Reynolds* (p. 40) has quoted an unpublished letter in which Sterne says that the painter presented him with the picture "as a tribute . . . that his heart wished to pay to my genius. That man's way of thinking and manners are at least equal to his pencil." Professor Cross (p. 201) says that the likeness was undertaken "at the request of" Lord Ossory.

P 163, line 26, delete "bride's"

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STERNE

A STUDY

CHAPTER I

OF STERNE, APART FROM HIS "LIFE"

A VIVID likeness of Laurence Sterne still seems to fail the Georgian portrait gallery. The frame is there, and the wan, pensive, roguish face, with the lips maliciously sentimental. But the soul, about which Sterne declared himself so "positive," the soul which contradicted his actions, is missing. He has been much written about, mapped out, dissected, criticised, but maps and anatomical plans are never portraits. We hear too little of his accents, see too little of his gestures. Even the few sketches of him show small perspective, and views without perspective may be decoration, but they are not pictures. Sterne's own "gerund-grinders" ("Smelfungus" and "Mundungus") may labour over his "Life," yet what is life without living? The moles have been busy with the firefly, but the dancing, gleaming thing eludes their patience. Nor have the critics succeeded in capturing him. Even Thackeray, the master who borrowed so many of his strokes, has dwelt on his lubricities, importing the worst of the man into the best of his work, and about the man, indeed, there is much that is questionable. In this regard Thackeray perhaps should be forgiven no more than

Sterne. But debtors are seldom the fairest judges of their creditors. More almost than any man of genius in the eighteenth century (except perhaps Boswell), Sterne has been alternately flogged and patronised by his inferiors.

When the French commissary of the posts asked Tristram Shandy who he was, he returned the significant answer, "Don't puzzle me." Though Sterne assured his "Eliza" that he was the most "transparent" of men, and wrote to a friend, "I show all," though Heine, comparing him with Jean Paul, says from a true standpoint that Sterne bares himself naked, a riddle to himself and others he was and wished to be. It was part of his philosophy that the most trivial things are enigmas. But we who watch him in his century, that atmosphere of varnished licence and cruel tenderness, need not be so perplexed. We have fresh lights to guide us. He has written himself down on many of his own pages, and his essence rather than his character—the word "character" mates ill with Sterne—is not fleeting, but permanent. For Sterne sums up a modern type, that of the vagabond sentimentalist and fugitive feeler, self-conscious, loose, morbid, errant, artistic, æsthetic to the core. You can watch him, this firefly that fancied himself a star. And though the stars look down on his brief night hour with eternal scorn, we mortals, who flit so often, however highly we aspire, are concerned with his wanderings.

He was the first to strike the note of personal intimacy in prose fiction. He was its first fantastic, its first master of pathos; the first in eighteenth century prose to perceive the joy, though not the grandeur, of nature, the first to vignette life. He founded modern impressionism, substituting for descriptive literature a diary of sensations, and a scale of cadence for a string of sentences. He went entirely off the lines of his environment, contradicting its forms and shocking its formality. He was, in the strict sense of the term, an

eccentric His own words about the elder Shandy fit him well "The truth was, his road lay so very far on one side from that wherein most men travelled, that every object before him presented a face and section of itself to his eye, altogether different from the plan and elevation of it seen by the rest of mankind—in other words, it was a different object. He saw kings and courts and silks of all colours in such strange lights!" Such were the gossamer impressions that Sterne dramatised and christened "Shandean"

But Sterne was more than a channel for these His essence may be best conveyed by the label of "a detached sensationalist" His personality played on the whole gamut of sensation, but the particular bar that momentarily absorbed him sounded like the whole tune, so poignant was its appeal, so sensitive was his ear His acute sensationalism indeed precludes him from attaining the highest harmonies For he could never realise the complete score, so keenly did his favourite notes possess him, the music of his moods The part detained him from the whole He was a sequence of interludes, and hence arose his invertebrateness, his lack of centrality, the mastery of his touch, the limitations of his range He himself has given us the clue On one occasion his Parisian admirer, the young Suard, asked him to account for this odd amalgam of the fixed and the fluid—the volatile salt in him, changeful yet consistent Sterne's answer deserves close attention He owned, he said, "one of those delicate calibres dominated by the sacred, informing principle of the soul, that immortal flame which at once supports life and consumes it, which sublimates and varies every sensation by unexpected starts" "This creative faculty," he went on, "is named imagination or sensibility according as it gets vent under a writer's pen either in graphic scene-painting, or in the portraiture of the pas-

sions.”¹ So Sterne sums up his own nature, over-dignifying it perhaps, yet warranted by its flitting phases. The salt has not lost its savour. His vein persists both at home and abroad. It will be found leavening Thackeray, Dickens, and even Carlyle; in more recent days, notably Robert Louis Stevenson, not to speak of moderns like Mr William Locke and Mr Anthony Hope. Sterne’s imprint is visible on some of Goethe, more of Jean Paul, and much of Heine. In France he has imbued Xavier de Maistre, and he has tinged Saintine. He claimed that he “would swim down the gutter of Time”: assuredly he has done so.

And his belongings interest us too: his association with “Count” Steele, the strolling artist who brought young Romney to York and painted the future author; his wife’s kinswoman, the redoubtable Mrs Montagu, whom Sterne always called “cosin” and who to the last returned his devotion; John Blake, the parson headmaster of York Grammar School, who consulted him on his most private concerns and to whom Sterne addressed an amusing letter about his correspondence;² his fitful, shocking friend, John Hall-Stevenson; his grotesque comrade, Thomas Bridges of York; his normal friends at Stillington, the comfortable Crofts; Fothergill, the wise “F” of his early letters; and all the setting of the worldly-holy Cathedral circle, with those bickering intrigues after Church perquisites that made it a miniature of London placemanship; his coquettish daughter Lydia, the self-willed “child of Nature,” who might almost have been a creation of his own brain; his scolding, suffering wife—“a shrill, penetrating sound of itself,” he says of the very word—that wife of whom

¹ Professor Cross gives this passage (otherwise translated) in his *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*. It comes from D J Garat’s *Mémoires historiques sur la vie de M Suard*, vol. II pp 147-152

² This letter (from the autograph collection of Mr H H Raphael, M P) is introduced *post* in Chapter VI

we hear so little and from whom Sterne heard so much, and all the other frail wives of his capricious fancy—Kitty de Fourmentelle, the sweet singer of York, the great lady of Paris, the "Witty Widow", his London Queens of Sheba (his own phrase) who came to visit this equivocal Solomon, and ere the last, the proud Lady Percy and the languishing Eliza Draper

Sterne is phantasmal That is at once his distinction as an artist, his drawback as a man His sentimentality was peculiar He lived in shadows, he made a reverie of feeling, and a drama of reverie This is no generalisation His dream of the nun "Cordelia," which first figures in these pages, leads up inevitably to the last chapter of his "Journal to Eliza" It forms a pattern to which he fitted the less living creatures of existence Nothing in or around him seems real, and the unreality is genuine All are *fantoccini* in shadow-land Yet out of these unsubstantial shapes, and by sheer subtlety of stroke, he bodied forth those undying realities, Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, and the valet La Fleur, he presented those immortal interludes of poor Le Fevre and the Dancing Maid of Languedoc, he wove a spider-web of suggestion which, though it entangled nasty flies in its fine-spun filaments, also caught the fresh dew of the morning He revolutionised style Moreover, strange as it may appear, he exerted a lasting humanitarian influence on our fellow-feeling with dumb animals, unemancipated slaves, misused servants, every victim of bigotry or oppression And the man who did this was a lanky, spare, meagre, crack-brained parson, a rake at heart, who should never have preached or married, whose ideas (as he owns) were "sometimes rather too disorderly for orders"¹, a consumptive

¹ This, Sterne tells us in one of his letters, was an "expression which dropped from the lips of the arch prelate" (Gilbert of York.) He adds that

with the quick brain and slippery senses—that perverse acuteness which is the heritage of the hectic and hysterical ; a sort of Rousseauite in a country cassock, tied to a jog-trot parish round till he had reached the age of forty-six, an age which the French call “critical.” Here, surely, is a point which Smelfungus misses, a point of much meaning as regards Sterne’s long concealment and late activities. He had been married close on twenty years before repute and disrepute opened to his own amazement. He was forty-six when he burst upon the world.

the archbishop “in his private hours” was always “most cordial” Cf. *Original Letters of the late Mr Laurence Sterne*, Logographic Press, London, 1788, p 27 In another of these letters he speaks of his own “spare, meagre form” (*ibid*), p 111 he was a tall man, he tells us elsewhere, about six feet high

CHAPTER II

OF STERNE'S LIFE, APART FROM STERNE

STERNE was forty-six when he wrote the two first volumes of *Tristram Shandy*—in other words, he was forty-six when he was born. If he had not been born then, what were his antecedents?

I suppose that everybody (that is nobody but you and me and Mr Mundungus) knows that he descended from an old East Anglian family—though Sterne denied his Danish blood—a stock which, by dint of espousing heiresses, had drifted into Yorkshire. That the crest of this family was a “Stearne” or starling, which accounts for the famous “I can’t get out” episode in the *Sentimental Journey*. That in *Tristram Shandy* Sterne speaks of a “great-aunt Dinah” who left a legacy, and whose “black velvet mask” he turns into a new-fangled form of adjuration. That in the same chapter he tells “Eugenius” (his intimate, Hall-Stevenson) how “for these four generations we count no more than one archbishop, a Welsh judge, some three or four aldermen, and a single mountebank,” though “in the sixteenth century we boast no less than a dozen alchymists.” This first dignitary was his great-grandfather, whose marble effigy in the cathedral Sterne thought so like himself,¹ and who had

¹ “In the marble whole length figure which dignifies the monument,” Sterne wrote to William Combe, “you will find the likeness stronger” (than in the Jesus College portrait). And he continues: “He was an excellent prelate and an honest man—I have not half his virtues, if report speaks true.”

been a grave archbishop when Charles the comic came to his throne.

Sterne's father (a younger son of Simon Sterne and Mary, the wealthy granddaughter of Sir Roger Jaques of Elvington) was a luckless, brisk, feckless subaltern in two successive regiments, one of which was the famous "Handisides." This Roger Sterne went about adventuring in the long War of Succession, an unpromoted campaigner who made no stay in any one place, and married the daughter of a camp sutler to pay his debts. Sterne's mother, the *vivandière* of the regiment, was born "Agnes Nuttall," and when Roger Sterne took her to wife was the widow of a Captain Hebert, with decent connections in Ireland, and a good-for-nothing son who wasted his substance in that country. The Yorkshire Sternes resented this misalliance, and treated the faithful, vulgar soul with middle-class contempt.

While Bolingbroke was manœuvring the Peace of Utrecht, he little dreamed that he was contributing to the birth of a great humourist, and to that charming piece in *Tristram Shandy* where Uncle Toby vindicates the virtue of war. Shortly after the treaty was concluded, and just a year preceding the birth of Rousseau (Sterne's temperamental kinsman), Ensign, or "Captain," Sterne had to come home. And his wife, hasting with him from Dunkirk to Ireland for the purpose, brought Laurence Sterne into the world on the twenty-fourth of November 1713, almost under the sign of Capricorn. He was her second child. The first had been Mary, a beauty sacrificed to a Dublin spendthrift, one Weemans, who beat and bullied her till she died of a broken heart.¹

of us both—and for his sake I hope it does, and for my own I hope it does not" Cf *Original Letters of the late Mr Laurence Sterne*, Logographic Press, London, 1788, p 26

¹ Cf Sterne's *Fragment of Autobiography*, which prefaced his daughter Lydia's edition of his *Letters* and is a fine specimen of his style

Laurence Sterne first saw the light at Clonmel, that "Vale of Honey" which was also a centre of the woollen trade. And throughout his childhood the Irish quarters were the most permanent. Indeed, a collateral branch of the Sternes had settled in Ireland much earlier, had won Church preferment and been associated with Swift.

No rest had Roger Sterne or his wife thenceforward. Child after child appeared, two with fanciful names, and all with frail constitutions—"Joram," "Little Devijcher," and the rest. Only one survived, Catherine, and small affection seems to have subsisted between brother, mother, and sister.

Roger, on the disbanding of his regiment, resought the maternal seat of Elvington, but again the troops were called out, and the nomads set off, with many adventures, to Ireland once more. The Peace of Utrecht and the Hanoverian Succession did not end their wanderings or mend their fortunes. Over Ireland they roved, from garrison to garrison, when the Vigo Expedition, the siege of Gibraltar, and eventually the Triple Alliance sent the regiment off again over seas and lands, the poor undaunted ensign far away, duelling (for a goose) and fighting for his country till, during March 1731, he drooped and died, a childish imbecile, in Jamaica.

Meanwhile the struggling family were driven from point to point, with hairbreadth escapes by shore and water—to the Isle of Wight, Wales, and over Ireland again. There the boy nearly lost his life in a mill-race—an accident which had happened long before to an ancestor. At the age of eight, the neglected Laurence learned his letters in Dublin Barracks. By the age of ten his father had already removed him from his mother's rather moulting wing and settled him at school near Halifax under the care of a brother, Richard Sterne of Woodhouse Hall. Up to that time Sterne's

childhood was a barrack-room ballad, and the barrack-well seems to have been the source from which he drew the dear old soldier and his faithful servant who are still glories of our literature. "If," Sterne tells us in *Tristram Shandy*, "if when I was a school-boy I could not hear the drum beat but my heart beat with it, was that my fault? Did I plant the propensity there? Did I sound the alarm within, or Nature?" But now all shifted with the scene. Removed at Halifax from his early surroundings, the lad was thrown in upon himself. He proved the usual dunce-genius, idle though promising. It was said that he would make his name, and at any rate he has himself told us that he scrawled it on the school-room ceiling.

Such, then, is the genesis of Laurence Sterne, sickly by inheritance, gipsy by nature, forced from the stir of war into the tame humiliations of dependence, homeless by fate, with some ancestral fame on one side and a coarse under-current on the other, the sport of circumstance, a bantling of the barracks. Drums and bugles sounded his lullabies, rough soldiers must have tossed the puny boy in their arms, and his mother, I fancy, could use her fists. You would have expected a tough little hero or a hardened little ruffian as the upshot. Not a bit of it! Nature plays queer tricks with environment. Out of these elements she moulded a dreamy urchin with small relation to his surroundings, who developed into king's jester at the court of Bohemia. Sterne never saw a battle, but the fear and throb of warfare had bitten into his soul. The lawlessness and restlessness of necessity faced a constitution fickle, sensitive, furtive, delicate. He was a waif by birthright, and there is no sustained sentence in any part of his story: rather, it seems all hiatus and parenthesis. In his own words, he was "born for digressions," and perhaps for transgression also. He could rivet himself to nothing. His life and his books were a

OF STERNE'S LIFE, APART FROM STERNE

casual ward Does not Tristram Shandy (informed by uncle) start with a gap ante-natal? Does not Sterne, in unquoted verses which he contributed to his "Cousin Hall-Stevenson's *Crazy Tales*, descant on "the beautiful oblique" of his method—

" No one notion
But is in form like the designing
Of the peristaltic motion ,
Vermicular , twisting and twining
Going to work
Just like a bottle screw upon a cork " ¹

Does not he tell us, in words which Charles James Fennell afterwards appropriated, "I begin with writing the first sentence, and trust to Almighty God for the second" ?

Whence, outside the strong after-influences of music and the Bible, he derived his wonderful vocabulary, his rhythm at once simple and subtle, and the dainty phrasing that interprets the sense, we know not The artist within him after all may have come from the Irish strain of that common down-trodden mother Every quiver of Sterne reflects itself in the troubled pools of emotion Mere feeling proved his truest experience, and he grew up a perverse child of reverie He was neurotic We should, I am afraid, have thought him a horrid boy

¹ " My Cousin's Tale."

CHAPTER III

THE PRELUDE TO STERNE'S WIFE

THE child of reverie ! From earliest years Sterne loved his dreamy communings. "How the wind blows I know not," he sighs in one of his late letters, "and I have not an inclination to walk to my window, where perhaps I might catch the course of a cloud and be satisfied." He grew weary, he wrote in another, of "talking to the many" : he liked "conversing with the ancient and the modern dead" —the "mutes" who could not resent his handling. But still more he loved to body forth love-episodes alone. Feeling for feeling's sake, however—the sentimentalism which means feeling without passion—is an opiate which, if habitual, soon deadens the heart. During the last year of his life, Sterne wrote to a friend about the *Sentimental Journey* that "it will, I dare say, convince you that my feelings are from the heart, and that that heart is not one of the worst of moulds." It was not that originally, but Sterne's titillations had so weakened its framework that it could scarcely serve for common use. "I have torn my whole frame to pieces by my feelings," he confessed at the close.¹ And so it might almost be doubted whether Sterne ever owned a heart at all save in his own imaginings. If so, it was in the wrong place ; it lay, not in attachments, but in the flutter of his moods, memories, and pulsations. It was a frisking,

¹ Cf Sterne's *Letters*, published by his daughter (1775), vol iii p 115

for he was receptive, not active. It was the fact of feeling that enthralled him. What he realised was the pang and the thrill, the pleasure of variegated sensation. His tenderness was more towards others than for them; he draped it in the mists of sentiment, and he made it vocal through the tremolo of his style. By virtue of the extreme sensitiveness of that style his pity stood soliloquising. But directly it stepped forward it often went after what he has himself termed "that tender and delicious sentiment which ever mixes in friendship where there is a difference of sex." And on that feeling he played his fantasias.

"Sweet pliability of spirit," he was to muse in the *Sentimental Journey*, "that could at once surrender itself to illusions which cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments—long—long since—had ye numbered out my days, had I not trod so great a part of them on this enchanted ground. When my way is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it to some smooth sentimental path which fancy has scattered over with rosebuds of delights, and having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthened and refreshed. When evils press upon me and there is no retreat from them in this world, then I take a new course—I leave it—and as I have a clearer idea of the Elysian Fields than I have of Heaven, I force myself like Æneas into them. I see him meet the pensive shadow of his forsaken Dido, and wish to recognise it—and I see the injured spirit wave her head and turn off silent from the author of her miseries and dishonour—I lose the feelings for myself in hers, and in those affections which were wont to make me mourn for her when I was at school." Here Heine is justified. Sterne lightens the ills of life by a sensibility to the sorrows of others—and this is tragedy's true function. But here, surely, can be heard

also the self-indulgence of a self-pity distracted by the quick play of emotions

And Sterne, as a great and pathetic humourist, pursued this life of sensation far more beautifully and brightly, far more sociably than did Rousseau, though with much the same selfishness that Rousseau used in embarking on like voyages. Should anyone wish to test their likeness and unlikeness in such matters, let them compare Rousseau's mawkish account of his penchant for the Turin tradeswoman with Sterne's famous episode of the Paris grisette. Rousseau is all shy nastiness, Sterne, all brisk and delightful impression. Rousseau stands greasy and pawing, there is nothing unctuous about Sterne, who dallies with heart-beats, spruce and smiling, like a child caressing its birthday doll. Rousseau can never throw himself out, Sterne can, but the self-centred, philandering mood is the same—a mood that retires to feed on itself when it cannot fasten on something outward.

Yes, Sterne was the child of reverie. When he was "curing" (Heaven save the mark!) the souls of a Yorkshire moorside he thus wrote to a friend in a letter of invitation as yet unquoted, a letter which pictures the refrain of his life, his Reverie of the Nuns —¹

"After coffee I will take you to pay a visit to my nuns. Do not, however, indulge your fancy beyond measure, but rather let me indulge mine, or at least let me give you the history of it, and the fair sisterhood who dwell in one of its visionary corners. Now what is all this about? you will say. Have a few moments' patience and I will tell you

¹ This seems to have been no other than William Combe, that strange vagrant in literature whose life was all mystery and moneylessness, and one of whose after-escapades (if Samuel Rogers can be trusted) closely concerned Sterne's own Eliza.

also the self-indulgence of a self-pity distracted by the quick play of emotions

And Sterne, as a great and pathetic humourist, pursued this life of sensation far more beautifully and brightly, far more sociably than did Rousseau, though with much the same selfishness that Rousseau used in embarking on like voyages. Should anyone wish to test their likeness and unlikeness in such matters, let them compare Rousseau's mawkish account of his penchant for the Turin tradeswoman with Sterne's famous episode of the Paris grisette. Rousseau is all shy nastiness, Sterne, all brisk and delightful impression. Rousseau stands greasy and pawing, there is nothing unctuous about Sterne, who dallies with heart-beats, spruce and smiling, like a child caressing its birthday doll. Rousseau can never throw himself out, Sterne can, but the self-centred, philandering mood is the same—a mood that retires to feed on itself when it cannot fasten on something outward.

Yes, Sterne was the child of reverie. When he was "curing" (Heaven save the mark!) the souls of a Yorkshire moorside he thus wrote to a friend in a letter of invitation as yet unquoted, a letter which pictures the refrain of his life, his Reverie of the Nuns —¹

"After coffee I will take you to pay a visit to my nuns. Do not, however, indulge your fancy beyond measure, but rather let me indulge mine, or at least let me give you the history of it, and the fair sisterhood who dwell in one of its visionary corners. Now what is all this about? you will say. Have a few moments' patience and I will tell you

¹ This seems to have been no other than William Combe, that strange vagrant in literature whose life was all mystery and moneylessness, and one of whose after-escapades (if Samuel Rogers can be trusted) closely concerned Sterne's own Eliza.

You must know, then, that on passing out of my back door I very soon gain the path which, after taking me through several flattened meadows and shady thickets, brings me in about twenty minutes to the ruins of a monastery, where, in times long past, a certain number of cloistered females had devoted their—lives—I scarce know what I was going to write—to religious solitude. This saunter of mine, when I take it, I call *paying a visit to my nuns*. It is an awful spot: a rivulet flows by it, and a lofty bank covered with wood, that rises abruptly on the opposite side, gives a gloom to the whole and forbids the thoughts, if they were ever so disposed, from wandering away from the place. Solitary sanctity never found a nook more appropriate to her nature! It is a place for the antiquary to sojourn in for a month, and examine with all the spirit of rusty research. But I am no antiquary, as you well know, and therefore I come here upon a different and a better errand—that is, to examine myself.”

And now observe the attitude: “So I lean lackadaisically over the gate and look at the passing stream and forgive the spleen, the gout, and the envy of a malicious world. And after having taken a stroll beneath mouldering arches, I summon the sisterhood together, and take the fairest among them, and sit down with her on the stone beneath the bunch of alders, and do—what, you will say? Why, I examine her gentle heart, and see how it is attuned; I then guess at her wishes, and play with the cross that hangs at her bosom—in short, I make love to her. Fie, for shame! Tristram, that is not as it ought to be. Now I declare, on the contrary, that it is exactly what it ought to be; for though philosophers may say, among many other foolish things philosophers have said, that a man who is in love is not in his right senses, I do affirm in opposition to all their saws—and see-saws—that he is never in his right

senses, or I would say rather in his right sentiments, but when he is pursuing some *Dulcinea* or other"¹

This typical day-dream of the sisterhood is no isolated experience. He twice mentions the place of his vision, and "*Cordelia*," its heroine, in his unpublished "*Journal to Eliza*," which will be found at the end of this volume, and he repeats this nun of his fantasy in at least two of his letters²

The phantom is the more piquant, since at York was a Papist girls' school which its enemies, among whom Sterne ranked foremost, styled the Nunnery. But the ruined abbey was six miles distant from the city, by breezy Coxwold, and there Sterne cast aside his Whig zeal, his petty cares, his sad broodings, and his "solitary sanctity" to drink his fill of airy nothings, by turns attentive to Nature and a dreamer of images cloyed and cloying.

Sterne was no more an "antiquary" than Heine was, but has erring fancy ever found more alluring expression? He was never "in his right sentiments" (unfrock thee, Tristram!) but when he was "pursuing some *Dulcinea* or other"! She was naturally not Mrs Sterne, though of her, at first, a *Dulcinea* he made. Poor Mrs Sterne! For all her failings, the laugh was rarely on her side, and it had been well for both of them had she never seen and been fascinated by young Laurey's lackadaisical blue eyes³

¹ *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne, never before published*, London, for the Logographic Press (1788), pp 2-5. The date is 1764.

² Cf. *Sterne's Letters to his Friends on Occasions*, London, 1775. This letter (No VI) is genuine from internal evidence. A phrase of which Sterne was fond appears in it. The passage runs "I visited my Abbey as usual every evening—amid the mouldering ruins of ancient greatness, I take my solitary walk, far removed from the news and bustle of a malicious world I can cherish the fond remembrance of my *Cordelia*—'Cordelia, thou wert kind,' etc. Another and later letter contains much of the same fantasy.

³ Sterne's eyes were of a blue nearly as piercing as Swift's. This is apparent from Mr Blake Wirgman's portrait of him in youth.

For he was in perpetual quest of some pleasant anchorage for his shallop of sensation. He liked to moor it by shimmering banks. Haze was his native air, and three years after this letter was written he again descanted on his own foible in a long appreciation of the valet La Fleur, whose "one misfortune in the world was to be always in love." "I am heartily glad of it," comments Sterne, "having been in love with one princess or another almost all my life, and I hope I shall go on so till I die, being firmly persuaded that if ever I do a mean action it must be in some interval betwixt one passion and another: whilst this interregnum lasts I always perceive my heart locked up—I can scarce find in it to give misery sixpence; and therefore I always get out of it as fast as I can, and the moment I am rekindled I am all generosity and goodwill again, and would do anything in the world either for or with anyone if they will but satisfy my thirst after sentiment. But in saying this surely I am commending passion and not myself." Flirtation was a fillip for the sickliness of his nerves, and with such potions he braced his wasting fibres. But Sterne's flirtations only objectified his dreams, nor did it matter much where he found them. When at length he met his Eliza, he assured her that he would gladly give her inhuman husband five hundred pounds, "if money could purchase the acquisition," to let her sit by him as he wrote the *Sentimental Journey*, if only for two hours "in a day." "I am sure," he urged, "the work would sell so much the better for it, that I should be reimbursed the sum more than seven times told."¹

Even Goethe once urged that philandering was needful for his early compositions; and for Sterne, as for the young Goethe, some sort of philandering seemed an artistic requisite; it "harmonises the soul," he assured a friend.

¹ *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775), pp 63-4.

He assured another the year before he died, in a passage which seems to condense the whole of his temperament "You can feel! Ay, so can my cat, but cater-wauling disgusts me *I had rather raise a gentle flame than have a different one raised in me* Now I take Heaven to witness, after all this *badinage*, my heart is innocent, and the sporting of my pen is equal, just equal, to what I did in my boyish days, when I got astride of a stick and galloped away"¹ And there was a deeper reason no one woman, it must be owned, can light every torch with her taper Are all these quenched tapers to be mourned, and is the enduring torch a mere blaze of selfishness? Sterne's indiscretions were often (not always) as harmless as Goethe's Musing in one of his least-known letters on an "affection" which he had "innocently indulged," he says "It is of a more delicate stamp than the gross materials nature has planted in us I hope ever to retain the idea of innocence and love her still"² His best susceptibility resembled thistle-down floating in the air, wavering above the ground as he surveyed it, and he himself confessed that he was "the most tender fool that ever woman tried the weakness of" This "*idea of innocence*" (its shape, not its substance) seems ever behind his peccant fancy He was not always a male coquette, but even when he was in earnest he never regarded woman as a lifelong companion she was an episode, like everything with which he had to do, and he preferred the episode to be impalpable Indeed, he has given his own quaint reason for this play with feeling Never, he says, did he resist temptation he ran away from it, being convinced that he would get bruised bodily in the conflict

¹ Cf the letter to "Sir W," 12th September 1767 (Dr Browne's edition of Sterne's Works (1885), vol iv p 584)

² *Sterne's Original Letters to his Friends*, London, 1788, pp 56-7

But this queer St Anthony only ran away from one Dulcinea to another, though sometimes the Dulcinea detained him. He confesses to falling in love regularly every vernal and every autumnal equinox. It was during the autumnal equinox that Sterne was to fall in with Elizabeth Lumley ; but, ere we reach it, a brief impression of the interval must be given.

The protecting uncle died, and a cousin, Richard, reigned in his stead ; nor hitherto has it been noticed that from this cousin Richard, Sterne seems to have derived his character of the elder Shandy.¹ Under his ægis, then, Sterne proceeded, in July 1733, with £30 a year irregularly paid, from a school near Halifax, or schools (for researchers differ), to Jesus College, Cambridge. And there he soon received a family perquisite of £30 more from a scholarship founded by his ancestor, the archbishop. Here, again, the sense of unreality which pervades him is manifest. Even his entrance examination was deferred till a more convenient season. Yet there is pathos in the situation. Save for his kinsman, Sterne informs us, he would have been "driven out naked to the world."

"The vivacity of his disposition very early in life distinguished him" : so writes his colleague and crony, John Hall-Stevenson. This "vivacity" lay more in feeling than in fact, and we know of none for whom the exterior of existence was more a mask than for Sterne. Routine was naturally not in his line. Off this and all lines he wandered, diving into back-ways and by-ways of books, credit, perchance

¹ In the first volume of *Tristram*, speaking of that eccentric's natural eloquence, Sterne relates : "I well remember when he went up along with me to enter my name at Jesus College in . . . It was a matter of just wonder with my worthy tutor, and two or three Fellows of his learned society, that a man who knew not so much as the names of his tools, should be able to move after that fashion with 'em."

of discredit also To one of his college tutors, however, —probably John Bradshaw—he was attached, and years later, when the tutor had blossomed into a master, he warmly commended and recommended him to a youth then on the threshold of a career¹

His familiar spirit at College was John Hall, afterwards (by a name bought through marriage) John Hall-Stevenson Sterne records that he first met him at Cambridge, though a contemporary alleges, and it is just possible, that the acquaintance dated from boyhood² John Hall was by two years Sterne's senior He came of a good Durham family and by a chance inherited the South Yorkshire castle of Skelton, near Saltburn-by-the-Sea He was a handsome madcap and hypochondriac, with more wit, says Sir Walter Scott, than grace, a dilettante born dilettante as *viveur*, as author, as confirmed valetudinarian, as an eccentric in would-be fashion, but this dilettantism must be qualified He was a dilettante in everything but delicacy, for the delicate was foreign to a mind which in this respect eventually added to his friend's degeneration A confirmed roué and an ardent book-lover, he plied a cynical tongue, which concealed, Sterne assures us, a kindly heart and many good actions His mine of scholarship Sterne prized "He always knows what ought to be liked," he wrote to a friend, "he is an excellent scholar, and a good critic But his judgment has more severity than it ought to have, and his taste less delicacy than it should possess He has also great humanity, but somehow or other there is so often such a mixture of sarcasm in it, that there are many who will not believe that

¹ Cf *Sterne's Original Letters*, p 6 "He was my tutor when I was at college, and a very good kind of man He used to let me have my way when I was under his direction, and that showed his sense, for I was born to travel out of the common road. And he had sense to see it, and not to trouble me with trammels"

² Cf the preface to the *Crazy Tales* (1795)

he has a single scruple in his composition. Nay, I am acquainted with several who cannot be persuaded, but that he is a very insensible, hard-hearted man, which I, who have known him long and know him well, assure you he is not. . . . He will do a kindness with a sneer or a joke or a smile, when perhaps a tear or a grave countenance would better become him. But that is his way ; it is the language of his character ”¹

Yet Stevenson could at times be more than an odd lazybones, and in 1745 he led a “flying squadron,” with General Oglethorpe for comrade, against the Young Pretender. Sterne undoubtedly proved a stimulant to an associate who always took refuge in bed when the wind was in the east. And here the old anecdote will be remembered, recounting how Sterne changed the direction of the weather-cock to dispel his comrade’s humours. Detesting the blasts of his bleak habitat, Hall-Stevenson, in his turn, liked to visit the damp, relaxing valley where his comrade’s first parish was situated. This bird of mixed omens assembled a strange medley in his Gothic nest—the mad club of “Demoniacs,” a faint reflection of the Medmenham Abbey hell-rakes. To these we must revert hereafter, but his chief intellectual influence over the young Sterne was to bring him into touch with Rabelais and the queer gang of pigmy Pantagruelists who succeeded that giant gipsy, reeking of immense garlic and laying waste the rank places of solemn shams. Such were Béroalde de Verville, Bruscombille, and Bouchet. Who reads them now ? And how little could these triflers have foreseen that two centuries after their gross fancies, a morbid and mocking English parson would sum them up and refine them. For refine them Sterne did. By his elfin obliqueness these Renaissance demons were transformed into Georgian imps.

¹ *Original Letters*, etc, 1788, pp 65-7

Hall-Stevenson, then, whose craze was for Crazydom, gave Sterne this Gallic impetus, though from his birth the instinct of the French was in him, his bent was for their style. But he followed the French Rabelaisians far more closely than he was able to follow Rabelais. For Rabelais is the Michael Angelo of grotesque, and such qualities transcended his track. So did those of the romantic satirist whose disciple Sterne always protested himself to be. Even thus early he must have conned Cervantes, nor in all his humours did he ever forget the knight of the rueful countenance and the squire of low degree. Sterne, however, wore no quixotic spurs. He was a knight erring as well as errant, and though he stamps himself a rescuer of distressed damsels, he displays little of his hero but the roaming fancy. "*Fay ce-que voudras*" was his Rabelaisian motto. "I generally act," he said, "upon first impulses," or "according as the fly stings." But that fly often stung Sterne to dalliance by the road—with those "angels," as he wrote, to which his "Balaam's ass" conducted him. Neither the beast, however, nor his curveting "hobby-horse" was a steed like Rosinante. Sterne always gave the freest and loosest rein to the instinct which carried him, and he caparisoned his palfrey with such bizarre trappings that we scarcely note its vices or bad breeding. With all his daintiness Sterne ranks among our frankest and freest humourists, both in his tears and laughter. It has been said that the fulness of humour is not for the young, who can only face half of life. Sterne faced the whole, and drew a fantastic philosophy from it, though he harped too often on the least savoury side.

Later on, he added to his French literature the sentiment of a novel, *Le Doyen de Coleraine*, and the dull candour of the *Paysanne Parvenue*.¹ Montaigne, too, lay ever on his

¹ *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 230

table In English thought he took Locke for his guide, "that history book," he styles him, "of what passes in a man's own mind"; and Locke himself would have been startled to find how much his analysis of the senses influenced Sterne's sentimentality. A lifelong favourite, too, was Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, that gold-mine of quotation and reflection, which has enriched so many authors with inexhaustible ore. Sterne still owes Burton a heavy bill. And he also sought out, now and afterwards, many a rare old English work on alchemy, fortification, and theology—most curious browsing-fields for his whimsical mind. Such were the elements that shaped it.

These and the Restoration dramatists were the Cambridge staple of the two companions while they sat and read together under the spreading walnut tree in the inner court of Jesus College. This tree they named "the Tree of Knowledge"—a knowledge, perchance, of evil more than of good :—

"At Cambridge many years ago,
In Jesus was a walnut tree,
The only thing it had to show,
The only thing folks went to see.

Being of such a size and mass,
And growing in so wise a college,
I wonder how it came to pass
It was not called the 'Tree of Knowledge.'"

These are Sterne's own verses in his contribution of "My Cousin's Tale" to his friend's *Crazy Tales*.¹

¹ Hall-Stevenson's *Works* (1795), vol. III p 28. The subjoined doggerel contained in the gossip of Sterne's friend Croft, also attests Sterne's authorship —

"This should be the Tree of Knowledge,
As it stands in so very wise a college"
Cf Whitefoord Papers, p 229

The world lay before the two fantasists John Hall soon set off for the grand tour before he tried to settle down at the castle, which he christened "Crazy" In July 1740, Sterne, with a light heart, empty pocket, and a diffuse tincture of the classics, duly graduated as Master of Arts Ovid's *Art of Love* was in his blood, and sanctity held aloof from his nature Yet the robe of sanctity he was forced to wear, it was his only outlet for career This is not an edifying spectacle, but such, in the eighteenth century, was often the profane Church, and it was said at the time that it was far easier to find a bad actor than a good clergyman

His mother, now in receipt of a £20 pension, bustled over from Ireland with his sister, in the hope (which her son never encouraged) of settling at Chester, but she had been repulsed by the grand Sternes of Elvington To them the drifting youth clung, as his only chance of rising in the world He had already profited by a Sterne pittance and a Sterne endowment. The Sternes must now find him some curacy But already he felt himself cut off from the bustle of life Shortly before he quitted Cambridge, he awoke one morning to find his bed deluged with blood A vessel had burst in his lungs, and he realised, what he never ceased to make light of, that his course would be a long tussle with death Such a battle he did all he could to convert into a scamper, and more and more he frisked with mortality

"The deuce take these bellows of mine," wrote Sterne to the Earl of Effingham, when, almost thirty years onwards, he burst another blood-vessel¹ But he did not always mock at his malady "O blessed health," he exclaims as Shandy, "thou art above all gold and treasure, 'tis thou who enlargest the soul and openest all its powers to receive

¹ Cf Professor W Cross's *Laurence Sterne*, p 344

instruction and to relish virtue. He that has thee has little more to wish for, and he that is so wretched as to want thee wants everything else. . . . O thou eternal maker of all beings, . . . thou whose power and goodness can enlarge the faculties of thy creatures to this infinite degree of excellence and perfection, what have we *Moonites* done?"¹ Nevertheless, in the main, and more and more, he made of death a butt to play his pranks on. One of these pranks, it must be owned, was his ordination.

On 6th March 1737, when he was twenty-four, the irreverend "Mr Yorick" submitted to the ordaining hand of the Right Reverend the Bishop of Lincoln in the Chapel of Buckden Hall. At present, however, the Sternes failed him. The Bishop it was who found the stripling a stopgap of a cure. For a space Laurence Sterne figured as curate of St Ives, near Huntingdon, whose graceful bridge his artistic eye must often have admired. Nothing more of this fugitive start is known but his vicar's name, William Piggot. That he resumed flirtation there is probable from a stray expression in a letter.² There were few openings at St Ives. After a year and a half the Sternes at last came to the rescue. Cousin Richard was now dead in his turn, like Uncle Richard before him. This time, his uncle Jaques (or Jacob) Sterne befriended the threadbare curate—Doctor and Prebendary Jaques Sterne, now Canon Residentiary and Precentor of York Cathedral, Archdeacon of Cleveland, and aspirant to an archbishopric, one of those coarse, grasping dignitaries whose life was not the lily,

"If tales tell true, nor wrong these holy men."

No Sterne, he may have thought, should want, even Laurey the wastrel; and Uncle Jaques, who was a fighting

¹ *Tristram Shandy*, vol. 1. p. 117

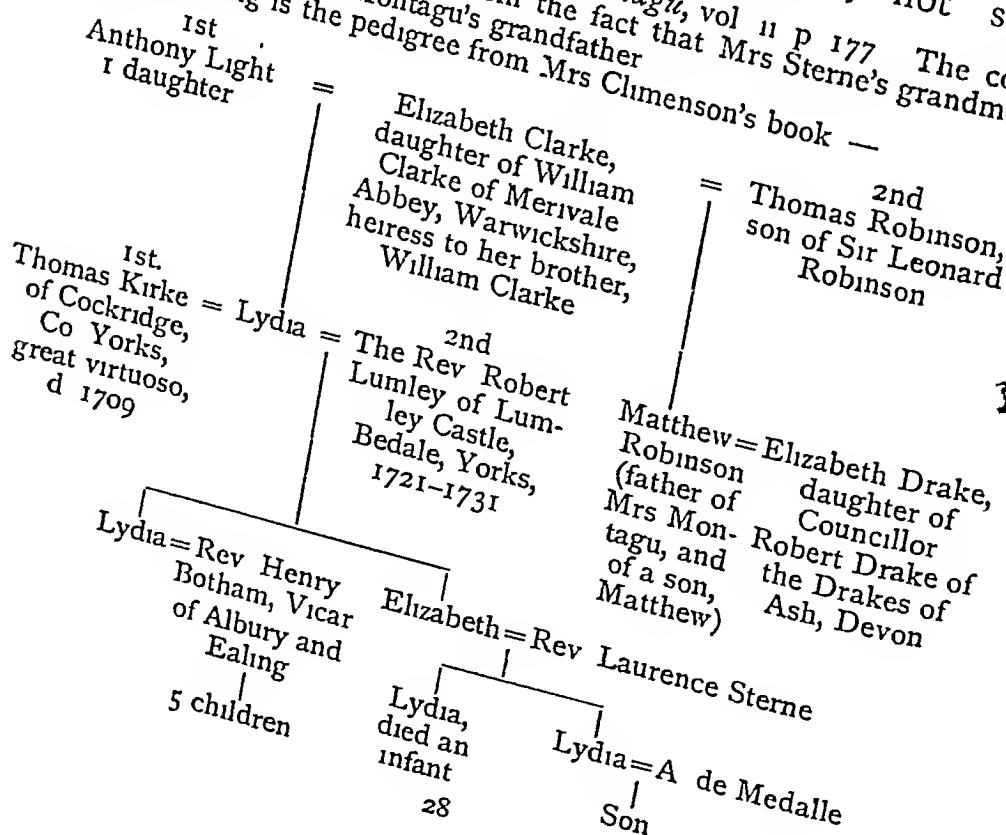
² The episode of "Harriot" to be quoted later

CHAPTER IV

ELIZABETH LUMLEY AND THE JESTER'S COURTSHIP

ELIZABETH LUMLEY, afterwards Mrs Sterne, has never been characterised. It has escaped biographers that she was the termagant and arrogant cousin of Elizabeth Montagu, "Queen of the Blue-stockings," and a connection of the great Pitt, to whom she sold her Hayes Villa; or that the *saloniste* herself branded her as "a fretful porcupine, always darting her quills at somebody or something"¹. These amenities were domestic, not social.

¹ Cf Mrs Climensson's *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 177. The cousinship with Mrs Montagu arose from the fact that Mrs Sterne's grandmother was half-sister to Mrs Montagu's grandfather. The following is the pedigree from Mrs Climensson's book —





MRS. STERNE

From the original portrait in crayons, by Francis Cotes
(In the possession of the Reverend G. W. Blenkins)

Sterne never ceased to praise the polish both of her intellect and her manners, and Sterne's Eliza Draper—one whom she had never seen, but who detested her—repeated not only Sterne's words, but her friend Annie James's, when she described her as for these qualities unrivalled "in Europe"¹ Such was Mrs Sterne, proud, querulous, and quarrelsome She grew to be an excitable virago, who as years went by seems even to have taken refuge in drink² If so, it might account for her "madness," and for her prolonged reproaches of abandonment by her kinsfolk

Her earliest grievance was to be found single at an age then perilously near old maidenhood She never made the best of Sterne, who afterwards came to contribute real causes for estrangement by his periodical escapes to the warmth of more sentimental companionships But if her whole life proved a chapter of complaints, she had compensations Nature had gifted her with a stalwart arm, which she wielded manfully—according to Mrs Montagu's brother, an "arm of flesh"

From the moment that Sterne espoused this nettle-bed, Mrs Montagu herself, despite his errors, espoused his cause "Madam," he once wrote to her when she begged pardon for a temporary misunderstanding, "injuries come only from the heart You, I know, never intended one, and so I had nothing to forgive I have much to thank you for, and am, with a heart full of the highest ideas of yours, your most affectionate cosin"³

When Nathaniel Hawthorne beheld Cotes's crayon, that first appears in this volume, he pronounced it the

¹ Cf her lengthy epistle from Bombay to Mrs James, of April 15, 1772. Add. MSS 34,527, ff. 47-70.

² Cf *ibid.* Mrs Draper's assertion was derived from other witnesses than Sterne, though he confirmed them

³ The whole of this interesting letter is in the autograph collection of Mr H H Raphael

visage of one so haughty and unamiable that he wondered how "Sterne ever contrived to live a week with such an awful woman."¹ Nevertheless, this likeness was taken when she was already forty-eight. Hawthorne was mistaken in supposing that her husband "ultimately left her." In the long run it was she who found it more comfortable to quit Sterne. All this, however, belongs to the future. At present she could be even tender. What she became was due partly to Sterne; what he became, mainly to himself; though he was never rough to her, and had great provocations.

In 1732 died the Rev. Robert Lumley (erst of Lumley Castle), Vicar of Bedale near Northallerton, a prize living worth close on two thousand pounds a year. He came of true and blue Yorkshire blood; in his veins ran that of the Rymers and Hoptons. The Lumleys descended from Lulph, a noble of the Conquest, and they could boast a long gallery of armoured ancestors.² One of these had been famous in the War of Succession, as Sterne did not fail to commemorate after he had married the descendant. "Your honour remembers with concern," said Corporal Trim (in an unnoted passage) to Uncle Toby, "the total rout and confusion of our camp and army at the affair of Landen: everyone was left to shift for himself; and if it had not been for the regiments of Wyndham, *Lumley*, and Galway, which covered the retreat over the bridge of Neerspeeken, the King himself would scarcely have gained it." Perhaps Mrs Sterne inherited the martial spirit.

This fortunate incumbent had married a certain Lydia,

¹ Cf *Our Old Home* ("Pilgrimage to Old Boston"), modern reprint, p 134. Professor Cross, in his *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne* (pp 109-10) has made the mistake of confusing this crayon portrait by Francis Cotes with a caricature that Sterne is said to have made of her.

² Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 139, where Mrs Montagu's sister-in-law recounts the glories of the seat near Newcastle.

widow of Thomas Kirke of Cockridge Hall, near Leeds in the parish of Adel, antiquary, virtuoso, and a Fellow of the Royal Society Lydia's father was Anthony Light of Cockridge, but she was born in London, and she probably brought grist to the Lumley mill These Lights recur in a curious connection When Sterne's "Eliza" quitted England in 1767 to rejoin her husband in India, it was a Miss Light who accompanied her on the voyage

Of this prosperous marriage sprang two petted daughters, who lived "in a superior style," as befitted their father's income But on his death they were impoverished, and owed part of their slender means to the intestacy of a nameless relative, as we learn from one of the Montagu letters¹ The elder, Lydia, wedded the Rev John Botham, the son of the Vicar of Clifton Campden in Staffordshire, where the Lumleys, too, seem to have owned property At first Rector of Elford in that county, next of Yoxall, this rather wild clergyman eventually became Vicar of Ealing in Middlesex, and Albury in Surrey, where his wife, the spendthrift mother of many children (sometimes god-mothered and always favoured by Mrs Montagu), died in 1753, and lies buried Elizabeth, the younger of the sisters, was much courted in small circles as an "heiress", but before the little windfall of 1741 just mentioned, her income did not exceed £30 a year²

In 1739, when Sterne first knew Miss Elizabeth Lumley, she was about a year older than her future lover She divided her time between Clifton Campden and York, where the concerts and assemblies presented the pink of provincial

¹ Of 1741 from Lydia, Mrs Sterne's sister The intestate was "an ancient woman" "in the north," "whose very name I am a stranger to" It consisted of some houses at Leeds of £60 yearly value. Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. 1 p 85

² According to the Montagu letters, only £30, but in Sterne's correspondence and his daughter's there are traces of the £40.

fashion, especially during the biennial race meetings, which brought together a concourse of youth, sport, and gaiety from all parts of the kingdom. Nor was a lively leaven of foreigners absent. Several French families are known; there was, too, a Mr Ricord who discounted bills; and an occasional visitor to Bishopsthorpe would be Sam Torriano, the London dandy, who, through Mrs Montagu, became Sterne's friend. Elizabeth Lumley relished these distractions. This independent young woman used to take up her abode in "Little Alice Lane" with a servant for duenna; the alley lay south of the Minster yard and hard by an arch marking the site of an old gateway into the close. Elizabeth was not beautiful, but she was very musical; and Sterne, who loved music, was no mean performer on the viol-di-gamba. She liked dancing, and so did Sterne, who must often have led her up in the minuet under the "magnificent lustres" which adorned the gorgeous Egyptian Hall of the York Assembly Rooms, designed after a draught by Palladio.¹ Unlike Sterne, she does not appear to have been a draughtswoman. Later still he became a painter in earnest, and the curves of his feminine handwriting attest him an artist. But Elizabeth shared Laurence's taste for reading, and she was thought interesting. At least she would listen to him for hours, and in such cases that is often the test.

For two years, as Sterne has told us and all the world knows, the young parson besieged this vigorous lady, who, though she liked him (for who could talk more beautifully or show a softer pity!), did not capitulate in a moment. Her delay, by his own testimony, was quite unselfish. "She owned she liked me," he wrote in the brief and striking memoir which he left to his daughter; "but she thought herself not rich enough, or me too poor, to be

¹ Cf Defoe's *A Tour through Great Britain*, vol. iii p 168

joined together”¹ She feared to burden her wooer, she shrank from consulting her relations as to his character, and “woman,” Sterne once wrote, “is a timid animal”²

The young lover had his way to make in this plaguy world, and the height of his present ambition would be the slow provincial preferment, which might be hampered by an early marriage. He was imprudent, too, even the halfpence burned his pocket, and she longed almost maternally to save him from himself. A wife and family must fare ill if the sum of Laurey's worldly goods amounted to less than one hundred pounds income, and the sole capital would be hers and might be squandered though, as a matter of fact, she refused to let it be settled on their marriage, nor did Sterne ever abuse a confidence for which he remained grateful³

Yet how wonderfully the sentimentalist discoursed, how fine she thought his preaching, what a languishment stole from his curious gaze, how sweetly he sighed, and oh, at her slightest pang, how tenderly he wept! For already Sterne showed the knack, congenital, though heightened by French example, of tearful feeling. His tears were the readiest possible. In the future he was always weeping over the sorrows even of insects, though ever with an oblique reference to his own. Nor was this affectation, for two tear-drops still stain a paper which he drew up in solitude, and for the benefit of his wife ere he first journeyed abroad. And when he was not weeping, how often he pressed the hands of women who were usually more interesting than beautiful! It is extraordinary what good fortune he was to have in this respect, but his rôle

¹ Cf *Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne to his most Intimate Friends*, p. 19, by Sterne's daughter Lydia de Medalle, 1775

² Cf *Original Letters*, 1788, p. 196

³ He records his gratitude in a letter to his uncle.

was ever that of the guide, philosopher, and friend—of that sympathetic guardian who used to be a figure familiar to the stage. In this regard it is perhaps not realised what an original Sterne was in his time and country. His luxury of nerves seemed quite foreign to his age, a totally new sensation, while at this moment of his courtship it was alien to English literature. Defoe had not wept in his *Roxana*, Fielding was still a pugilist in satire, and Richardson was only on the point of issuing his *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe*, who, when they came, shed tears of substance compared with Laurey's airy dew. Sterne brought the eighteenth century tears as he brought the woman's standpoint into fashion ; and if, long afterwards, even the dry Hume was to weep when he quarrelled with Rousseau, this was partly of Sterne's doing.

Oft and often would he come to share Elizabeth's modest meal in Little Alice Lane, or in some cottage-nook hard by the city and bowered "in roses and jessamin," which, perhaps remembering Swift, Sterne named "D'Estella."¹ In any case the unnoticed fact that in one of the later sections of *Tristram* he designates himself the "Curate D'Estella," shows that the name did not fade from his remembrance.

With pensive looks, perchance, he held her hand and felt her pulse—the pulse of feeling more than of circulation—as he was to do hereafter in the case of so many fleeting affinities. He made a sympathy of little things. And then he brought her books, and shared her tastes and outdoor pursuits. Shakespeare and music and flowers were his

¹ Professor Wilbur Cross, in his elaborate *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, makes the "roses and jessamin" which Sterne mentions in a letter of this date to Miss Lumley refer to a garden round the York lodging, but this is clearly not so, for Sterne in this very letter writes of "the valley where D'Estella stands," and adds that he "returned home to your lodgings"—the cottage probably belonging to the anonymous "Miss" who was their confidante

themes, yet he could handle a gun and manage a horse, though his hacking cough, pale face, and spider shanks proclaimed him delicate. For all his tears, he was not wholly morbid, something there was of wiry robustness about and within him. Sharp wit was on his tongue, and pathos, relieved both by paradox and innuendo. And as he languished, he smiled a romantic smile. How different, this, from the beefy types around her—the clumsy Squire Tunbellies, the pompous deans, the drowsy curates of her acquaintance! She found it hard to stem his winding approaches.

Yet here once more we are confronted by the essential unreality of Sterne, who breathes in his books far more than in the body. About this man there seems no bone or muscle, only arteries and nerve-centres, little to touch or handle. Glimpses of him we glean on several sides: letters of his remain, self-revelations, in plenty, but we cannot imagine him eating his breakfast, romping with a child (unless it were very pretty), or giving anyone a hearty shake of the hand. He seems always something outside himself, wavering around or over it. But of two elements we may be sure. His being held the seeds—he himself is our informant—of two loves, the “sacred” and the “profane,”¹—though for “sacred” should be read “airy,”—and the “profane” preponderated. On that side there was the strain, the nasty strain, belonging to the brotherhood of John Hall-Stevenson, though even here Sterne’s bent was far more sensuous than sensual, on the other, the aerial strain (though ethereal never)—the tricky, forward, laughing

¹ Cf. *Tristram Shandy*, vol. vii. pp. 139-40. “‘The latter,’ continued he, ‘partakes wholly of the nature of Venus, the first, which is the golden chain let down from heaven, excites the love heroic, which comprehends in it, and excites too, the desire for philosophy and truth.’ ‘To be sure,’ said my mother, ‘love keeps peace in the world.’ ‘In the house, my dear, I own.’ ‘It replenishes the earth,’ said my mother. ‘But it keeps heaven empty, my dear,’ replied my father.”

love that sought, as he himself puts it, "to get out of the body"—no sustained feeling of selfless affection or deep attachment, but a captivating caper of saucy spirits, at once stimulating pity and simulating it. And joined to both sounded those other notes of faun or satyr, of Pan playing on his pipes amid the rushes while the dryads peer from their forest

There is no need to insist that there is a clean and an unclean Sterne. What must be insisted, however, is that his libertinage is that of the freest fancy, not that of a fleshly rake; and in this domain, as in the rest, Sterne lacks actuality. His is a blithe, goblin grossness; and though his coarsest food is no meat for babes, it is not poison. It is bad, but it is not putrid. It does not corrupt, infect, or contaminate. Sterne never means to seduce; his wantonnesses are not real, nor is that prurience which only provokes a smile. The whim and wit of them blow away the scandal, just as the same qualities erase the blots in a first-rate French farce. Had it been otherwise, the blameless Lessing would not have loved Sterne's sallies, which were taken literally by the dense critics and caricaturists of his day. Sterne the author is no Lothario. In his own time women favoured his books, from the duchess, it was then said, to "the snuffy chambermaid." In ours, he is mainly read by men. Since Thackeray scourged him with Victorian scorpions, his first admirers have eyed him askance. True, much of *Tristram Shandy* is not for girlhood (Sterne called it a book for "the bedchamber"), nor all of the *Sentimental Journey*, which he styled "a book for the parlour." To that shelf, however, with some excisions, it might be restored. The part of Sterne which most shocks womankind is not his light and occasional lubricity, but the double meanings and the play at passion. Women realise that he is not virile. Yet, set by Rabelais, who was virile indeed, Sterne

is modest—a cascade to Niagara Compared with Hall-Stevenson, his worst page seems almost stainless, but compared with Goldsmith, the blemishes are foul indeed Still, one who could so well idealise the courtship of Uncle Toby and the heart-pangs of Corporal Trim surely saw some vision of love and sacrifice which he could not follow And this is another instance of what was urged at the outset—that though his cobweb of suggestion entangled filthy flies, it also caught the fresh dew of the morning Had not that dew been there, who would write about Sterne? With that dew in such odd commixture, who would not write about him?

And now that his courtship looms, we must pause awhile to recall his general outlook on love It was not high, but neither was it mean, though its main limit was gallantry Sterne, like Boccaccio, romanticised a thrill, not a passion And romance is the poetry of the nerves Compare Bandello with Boccaccio, and you have the difference between Stevenson who debased, and Sterne who Decameroned passion In this respect who can be more candid? He was not so Shandean as Tristram Shandy—so he protested shortly before he died And, though the dividing line is thin, his flirting fancy was more of the artist than the man Or, rather, he himself was less a man than an artist He loved his fancies He caressed his feelings, not their objects, and even his feelings want substance, they are lacework.

As a boy, we have seen how he grieved for Virgil's heroine, and "Oh," he exclaims in another passage, "there is a sweet æra in the life of man when (the brain being tender and fibrillous, and more like pap than anything else) a story read of two fond lovers, separated from each other by cruel parents, and by still more cruel destiny affords more *pabulum* to the brain than all the *Frusis*,

and *Crusts*, and *Rusts* of antiquity, which travellers can cook up for it.”¹

Shakespeare’s distich—

“Tell me, where is fancy bred—
Or in the heart, or in the head?”

goes to the root of Sterne’s love-philosophy. In *Tristram* is a striking piece showing that Sterne’s æsthetic flicker sprang more from the head than from the heart: “It is a great pity—but ’tis certain from every day’s observation of man that he may be set on fire like a candle, at either end, provided there is a sufficient wick standing out; if there is not—there is an end of the affair; and if there is, by lighting it at the bottom, as the flame in that case has the misfortune generally to put itself out—there is an end of the affair again. I, for my part, could I always have the ordering of it which way I would be burnt myself—for I cannot bear the thoughts of *being burnt like a beast*—I would oblige a housewife constantly to light me at the *top*, for then I should burn down decently to the socket.”²

With Sterne women were not a shrine, but a picture gallery through which the collector rambles. He discriminated their lights and shades. When Corporal Trim muses on mortality to the waiting-maid: “‘I could hear Trim talk so for ever,’ cried Susannah—‘What is it (Susannah laid her hand upon Trim’s shoulder)—but corruption?’ (Susannah took it off).” And here let Sterne’s comment be remarked: “Now I love you for this—and ’tis this delicious mixture within you which makes you dear creatures what you are’ ‘All I can say of the matter is—that he has either a pumpkin for his head—or a pipkin

¹ *Tristram Shandy*, vol. vii p 113

² *Ibid*, vol. viii p 41

for his heart,—and whenever he is dissected 'twill be found so '”¹

The humourist of sensations makes his *Shandy* say that love “is not so much a SENTIMENT as a SITUATION, into which a man enters, as my brother Toby would do into a *corps*—no matter whether he loves the service or no—being once in it he acts as if he did, and takes every step to show himself a man of prowess”² This is the love of Smollett or of Fielding But Sterne questions whether love be not a “disease,” and in the “Love’s Alphabet” which accompanies the story of Widow Wadman he reveals himself by showing that love is the most *lyrical* of all human passions, at the same time the most misgiving—and, he adds, “ridiculous” “‘You can scarce combine two ideas together upon it, Brother Toby, without an hypallage’ ‘What is that?’ cried my Uncle Toby ‘The cart before the horse,’ replied my father” Often as he dwells on its physical foundation, love’s whimsical aspect is never far from his thoughts Widow Wadman is made to observe, when Uncle Toby stays with her, that a woman mixes a man up with her house and furniture And, with the irony which always underlies him, Sterne tells us that in love “the suffering party is at least the third”

Sterne never put love on the pinnacle of chivalry Though sometimes he idealised, he did not consecrate or shield it with a vestal armour Nor did he hedge it round with obstacles for knights to vanquish, or seclude it in wilds inaccessible for daring to penetrate Love meant for him no Sleeping Beauty, no peerless rose won only through thorns and brambles by some heroic prince Sterne was a nomad pagan who peeps at love by every wayside corner And women, he takes as facts “Nature is Nature,” he says in one place But then neither does

¹ *Tristram Shandy*, vol. viii p 144.

² *Ibid*, vol v p 52

Sterne wholly profane love, though he will not compound with conventions. love for him is a sensation which he æstheticises: "I said we were not stocks or stones, 'tis very well,—I should have added, nor are we angels. I wish we were; but we are men, clothed with bodies and governed by our imaginations, and what a junketing piece of work there is betwixt these and our seven senses, especially some of them; for my part, I own it, I am ashamed to confess. Let it suffice that of all the senses, the eye, for I absolutely deny the touch, though most of your barbari I know are for it, has the quickest commerce with the soul—gives the smarter stroke, and leaves something more inexpressible upon the fancy than words can either convey—or sometimes get rid of." This is nearer the Renaissance. It presents love as an object of art, and the lover as virtuoso. But, though love's dilettante, Sterne could be earnest as well as whimsical. "'I thought *love* had been a joyous thing,' quoth my Uncle Toby. 'Tis a most serious thing, an please your honour (sometimes) that is in the world.'" Trim meant his answer; he had suffered.

We need not doubt that in his own courtship Sterne was serious. He had caught on fire from the "top"; Elizabeth Lumley appealed to his head. In his after-coquetries, the question might occur as to what the charm of this unsubstantial man was. For it is certain that women were always as much on his side as most men were against him. Quaint as his strange countenance looked, odd as his harlequin figure, he was the reverse of handsome. His amusements were rather the eccentricities of a worn phthisic racing with death than such as attract the gentle or the gay. I think it was the blend of the two loves already noticed, that drew so many "misunderstood" moths to his pale candle.

His paganism was not materialist, and none could call

him a voluptuary Women beheld in him a strange will-o'-the-wisp straying in the twilight of the senses His mystery summoned them, and his elfin mockeries, far more than any malign, erotic glamour And something there was in him that called on all who suffered, or thought they suffered, from the normal, brutal man, the feminine in him appealed to the feminine Mischievous as he was, he never seems to have done them much harm, nor, outwardly or inwardly, can he be called wholly of the flesh He got "out of the body" because, except in dreams, he was rarely in it He was often kind, always considerate, and he could be disinterested Nay, we know from a letter already cited that he could be genuinely innocent It concerns "a once sprightly and vivacious Harriot," and expresses unfeigned indignation against the man who had been "the fatal cause of overwhelming the spotless soul, and plunging the yet untainted mind into a sea of sorrow and repentance" "In such cases," he asks, "does not man act the part of a demon?" "Had I known his pretensions," he resumes, "I should have flown on the wings of friendship, of regard and of affection—and rescued the lovely innocent Be not alarmed at my declaration—I have long been bound to her in the reciprocal bonds of affection I would love the whole sex were they equally deserving" And after a fresh outburst he dwells demurely on the "delightful task of whispering peace to those who are in trouble, and healing the broken in spirit" Once more, and in another letter "Surely the pleasures," he muses, "which arise from contemplating such characteristics" (and he is speaking of gracious ladies)—"embracing the urn which contains their ashes, and shedding tears of friendship for it—are far, far superior to the highest joys of sense, or sensuality" And "If you do not like the last word," he concludes as Yorick, "I pray you be so kind as to

scratch it out, for that is a liberty I have never ventured to take myself with anything I write."¹

Sterne, as a man, was a Lothario mainly of the mind. Indeed, he says as much in a late and laughing letter to "Hannah" or "Mrs H.," whom he rallies on vague flirtations; and he mocks at unsubstantial love-making with double amusement to another friend. He liked romances in the air, and the high-born fribbles who humoured and cajoled him never dreamed of Yorick as an earthy gallant. Kitty de Fourmentelle and Eliza Draper were the sole passions of his life, and even these hardly deserve the name. Rather, they were phantoms of passion, as the rest were the sport of sentiment. The miasma lay, not in his hazy actions, but in his brooding nerves, while above that miasma shone a sunshine that often pierced and sometimes dispersed it.

The originality of Sterne's gushes has been hinted; their mawkishness was tempered by his irony. He was the first to coin the word "sentimental" in our language, and that too in one of the first letters which at this time the plaintive suitor addressed to the lady of his choice. Some have thought that he derived this adjective from France, but when his works were translated into French, "sentimental" had to be repeated, just as in German it was Lessing who suggested to the translator of the *Sentimental Journey* the paraphrase of "empfindsam." The term was wholly new, and to it Sterne subsequently added the verb "sentimentalise."² After promising a correspondent all the joys of the simple life, "In the meantime," he proceeds, "we will philosophise and sentimentalise—the last

¹ For the first quotation, cf *Sterne's Letters to his Friends on Various Occasions*, London, G Kearsly, 1775, pp 54-62, and for the second, *ibid.*, p 52

² Cf *Original Letters*, etc., 1788, p 14 It seems addressed to William Combe

word is a bright invention of the moment, which was written for yours and Dr Johnson's service—and you shall sit in my study and take a peep into the world as into a show box, and amuse yourself as I present the pictures of it to your imagination. Thus will I teach you to love its follies, to pity its errors and detest its injustice—and I will introduce you among the rest to some tender-hearted damsel on whose cheeks some bitter affliction has placed a tear, and having heard her story you shall take a white handkerchief from your pocket and wipe the moisture from her eyes and from your own—I love the classics as well as any man ought to love them, but among all their fine science, their fine writings and their fine phrases, their most enthusiastic admirer will not be able to find me half a dozen stories that have any sentiment in them—and so much for that.” These late sentences contain the whole man, his artifice and his simplicity, for the two were inextricably blended. After Sterne's death, the Abbé Raynal said of him that “he was in love with the whole sex”, and Sterne, who had said the same, must have told it to the Abbé. A part of the *Sentimental Journey* concerning women, and written in Paris, reiterates it. “God bless them all,” says Sterne. “There is not a man upon earth who loves them so much as I do. After all the foibles I have seen and all the satires I have read against them still I love them, being firmly persuaded that the man who has not a *sort of affection for the whole sex* is incapable of ever loving a single one as he ought.”¹ Dickens's Mr Sneve-licci, it will be remembered, also owned that he loved “every one of them.” But then he was otherwise inspired, and he was not a sentimental tramp.

Miss Lumley set off to join her sister at Yoxall rectory,

¹ Cf *Sentimental Journey*, vol. II p 65

and Sterne, after visiting the cottage of "Miss S.," their mutual friend, actually took on his lady-love's "Minster lodgings," and haunted her deserted precincts. To feast on feeling was ever his regimen. The familiar letter to her in which he first uses the word "sentimental" will bear repetition :—

"Alas, everything has now lost its relish and look ! The hour you left D'Estella I took to my bed—I was worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most of all that fever of the heart with which thou knowest well I have been wasting these two years, and shall continue wasting till you quit S. [Staffordshire]. The good Miss S., from the forebodings of the best of hearts, thinking I was ill, insisted upon me going to her. What can be the cause, my dear L. [Lumley], that I have never been able to see the face of this mutual friend but I feel myself rent to pieces ? She made me stay an hour with her. And in that short space I burst into tears a dozen times,—and in such affectionate gusts of passion that she was constrained to leave the room and sympathise in her dressing-room. 'I have been weeping for you both,' said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity ;—'for poor L.'s heart I have long known it—her anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—her virtue as heroic—Heaven brought you not together to be tormented.' I could only answer her with a kind look and a heavy sigh—and returned home to your lodgings (which I have hired till your return) to resign myself to misery.—Fanny had prepared me a supper—she is all attention to me—but I sat over it with tears ; a bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other. For the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me ; one solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass ! I gave a thousand penetrating looks at the chair thou hast so often graced *in these quiet and sentimental repasts*

—then laid down my knife and fork, and took up my handkerchief, and clapt it across my face, and wept like a child—I do so at this very moment, my L, for, as I take up my pen, my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down the paper as I address the word L Oh, thou blessed in thyself and in thy virtues—blessed to all that know thee—to me most so because more do I know of thee than of all thy sex—This is the philtre, my L, by which thou has charmed me, and by which thou wilt hold me thine, while virtue and faith hold the world together—This, my friend, is the plain and simple magic by which I told Miss —— I have won a place in that heart of thine on which I depend so satisfied that time, or distance, or change, or anything which might alarm the hearts of little men, create no uneasy suspicions in mine I told you poor Fanny was all attention to me since your departure—contrives every day bringing in the name of L She told me last night (upon giving me some hartshorn) she had observed my illness began the very day of your departure for S, that I had never held up my head, had seldom or scarce ever smiled, had fled from all society, that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily That I neither ate nor slept, nor took pleasure in anything as before Judge then, my L, can the valley look so well or the roses and jessamin smell so sweet as heretofore? Ah me—but adieu! the vesper bell calls me from thee to my God!”

If any other but Sterne or Rousseau had thus written to his sweetheart we should scent hypocrisy Ruskin has distinguished between hypocrisy and imposture, relegating the first to sentiment Sterne was no impostor, in his letters he has told us how on one occasion he would not open a letter, lest he might tell a falsehood to his wife,

while, on another, he himself confessed to a white lie in terms that prove that he had a conscience. But he was a morbid, self-concentrated egoist, fondling his fancies and taking them for things. Some design there may have been in one of these sentences, for, "More do I know of thee than of all thy sex" betrays that side-flattery which is perhaps the most captivating to woman. And the whole is impregnated with himself; the "philtre," the love-potion, whereby she "charmed" him was *her* sympathy which he mistook for his own. None the less, these outpourings were not assumed. They stirred him, like the whispers of a breeze, and what he felt for the moment demanded æsthetic expression—the same expression, when the moment returned. Long before he had realised his literary power, he sported with life, flirted it like a fan, toyed with it slowly for the thrill of realising the process. By the by-play of such exercise he titillated and fortified himself, while the suffering which he liked and laughed at was a mere peg for his artistry. He would never have portrayed wretchedness at all, but for the luxury of its appeal. Or rather, he chased away unhappiness, as he did happiness, like butterflies, only to catch them, admire their glint, and put his pin (or pen) through their plumage afterwards. One winged butterfly followed another, till he made a butterfly-dance, away or towards it, of death itself. The physical courage which was his manliest endowment belonged also to this volatile order. All his pangs and ecstasies lay in the allurements, the capture, the impression, and the remembrance; he may be said to have had a memory for a heart. How true he remained to this wayward self appears from the fact that long afterwards—in the year preceding his lonely death—he repeated the self-same phases in the progress of his passion for "Eliza." Again he wept over the dishes, again he communed with the maid-

servant who pitied his broken heart Again he sought solitude and bemoaned his languishing frame, again he poured out his grief to a mutual friend, for a receptacle of woe was indispensable to Sterne All this will be found in the *Journal* at the end of this volume And in both cases it was the pleasure of self-pity that longed for a vent, and received a relief His whole being was a sieve for feeling, this one man started that sentimental vogue

About thirty years after this epistle was posted, and only four after the *Sentimental Journey* had been published, Goethe, who praised and acknowledged his indebtedness to Sterne,¹ surrendered himself for once to the rapture of pulsation, and dedicated it to suicide Rousseau doubtless contributed the phase, but Goethe found its remedy in the calm of Goldsmith and the confidence of that very Sterne who had abetted the foible Every print shop exhibited pictures of Werther prostrate before Charlotte or distraught in his rhapsodies over fate Put such hysteria into a stronger mould, raise the swell of feeling to the storm of passion, turn the tea into brandy, and we get Byron with his seared heart, defiant on the rock of exile, and a spectacle for mankind Truly Sterne was a pioneer

One word more, and we have done with this early love-letter It introduces another of Sterne's characteristics—those minute touches of observation that actualise his impressionism The touches themselves are impressionist, for Sterne was the first to subordinate details to the whole, to make them suggestive points in the general outline, to halve his imagination, as he said, with his reader's In painting, Turner was to do the same This quality

¹ Cf (*inter alia*) Eckermann's *Gesprache mit Goethe*, vol II p 29 In these conversations Goethe twice again alludes with pleasure to Sterne, and especially to his saying that he regretted that he had not made a more sensible use of misfortune.

will be treated more fully hereafter, but his own illustration shall be given at once. "There are certain combined looks of simple subtlety," he says when the Grissette shook her head in answer to Sterne's head-shake, "where whim, and sense, and seriousness, and innocence are so blended, that all the languages of Babel set loose together could not express them—They are communicated and caught so instantaneously, that you can scarce say which party is the infector. I leave it to your men of words to swell pages about it—it is enough in the present to say again, the gloves would not do; so folding our hands within our arms, we both lolled upon the counter—it was narrow, and there was just room for the parcel to lie between us." The famous passage follows about the gloves and their glances, their glances and the gloves. "She looked into my very heart and reins—it may seem strange, but I could actually feel she did."¹

After this, revert to the love-letter which Sterne never meant for publication. How he dallies over the details "*one solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass,*" "*a thousand penetrating looks at the chair,*" the handkerchief, the "*roses and the jessamin*"! This is not the mechanical "realism" of photography, but the miniature strokes that realise the lights and shades of an impression. Everything that Sterne handles becomes a symbol of sensation that converts the commonplace into art, assuages the author's longing to project himself, and builds, so to speak, a bridge of intellectual sympathy. Such handling is absolutely modern, and I know not who heralded it, however unconsciously, but Sterne.

Sterne's realist impressionism, moreover, is allied to yet another of his innovations. Colloquy with the reader was initiated by Steele and imitated by Addison, but it was not

¹ Cf *The Sentimental Journey*, vol 1 pp 175-7

the dramatic monologue of Sterne Over and over again in these conferences he draws pictures of himself—crying, laughing, fainting, restful, restless, in and out, off and on. He imports himself into all the landscape, and the same traits which disgust many in the man delight most as they are used by the artist Sterne is the playwright of impressionism

Sterne's maudlin lovesickness, from his wooing onwards, revolts the wholesome male Many a man must have watched to kick him, but Philistines were to arise who would have kicked Shelley had he not been so ethereal, and Byron had he not been a pugilist With the women it fared otherwise Kitty and Eliza, the lady at the door of the Calais *Remise*, the two Grisettes, Janatone the Montreuil innkeeper's daughter, distraught Maria, American Miss Graeme (afterwards Mrs Ferguson), and peerless Mrs Vesey—are not all these a cloud of witnesses?

CHAPTER V

THE COURTSHIP RESUMED

THE Sterne idyll proceeded in sequence. There was a quarrel ; there were protests. He was neglectful, and she in dudgeon. "I have offended her whom I tenderly love ! What could tempt me it ! But if a beggar was to knock at thy gate wouldst thou not open the door and be melted with compassion ? I know thou wouldst, for pity has erected a temple in thy bosom. . . . I have reconsidered this apology, and alas ! what would it accomplish ? Arguments, even if finely spun, can never change the nature of things ! So a truce with them !" And then he steals into her heart again, melting it by regret for "a very valuable friend lost by a sad accident." "And what is worse, he has left a widow and five young children to lament this sudden stroke." With Sterne, love lay ever in wait for charity. The sighing and laughing philosopher (and a philosophy Sterne had) grows pensive : the preacher was in him from the first. "These dark and seemingly cruel dispensations of Providence often make the best of human hearts complain." He can paint the distress of an affectionate mother "made a widow in a moment, weeping bitterly over a numerous, helpless, and fatherless offspring." Laurey's carelessness was also a providential dispensation, and how would his Elizabeth fare if in a moment she should be widowed also ?

He fretted for her return, she was coming back "May a kindly angel guide thy steps hither! Solitude at length grows tiresome Thou sayest thou wilt quit the place with regret, I think so too Does not something uneasy mingle with the very reflection of leaving it? It is like parting with an old friend"—observe the by-play—"whose temper and company," he proceeds, "one has long been acquainted with—I think I see you looking twenty times a day at the house,—almost counting every brick and pane of glass,—and telling them at the same time, with a sigh, you are going to leave them—Oh! happy modification of matter! They will remain insensible of thy loss—But how wilt thou be able to part with thy garden? The recollection of so many pleasing walks must have endeared it to you The trees, the shrubs, the flowers, which thou hast reared with thy own hands—will they not droop and fade away sooner upon thy departure?—Who will be thy successor to nurse them in thy absence?—thou wilt leave thy name upon the myrtle tree,—if trees, and shrubs, and flowers can compose an elegy, I should expect a very plaintive one upon this subject Adieu, adieu! Believe me ever, ever thine"

Already he had caught the art of matching the sound to the sense in the subtle music of phrases This plasticity of material, interpreting meanings, is of an impressionist's essence, and Sterne became a musician in words, the Pied Piper at whose call the feelings rushed trooping, and tripped frolicsome

Sick at heart and sick in body, at last Elizabeth came, pining for Laurence, yet fearing that she would die, for in communion with this half-consumptive, she seems to have imagined that she was the same Fancying herself in a decline, she betrayed the great love that she bore him Sterne, in the brief and exquisite memoir bequeathed to

his daughter, has thus recounted the sequel:—"I wrote to her often. I believe then she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so. On her return she fell into a consumption; and one evening that I was sitting by her with almost a broken heart to see her so low, she said, 'My dear Laurey, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live; but I have left you every shilling of my fortune.' Upon this she showed me her will. This generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her." But if she proved a Xantippe, he was never a Socrates.

No doubt Sterne felt himself flattered by an alliance with one who was cousin to Mrs Montagu—the centre of much fame and fashion, the most embroidered of the blue-stockings. He would scarcely have been so pleased had he read her family's opinion. A month after his marriage, Mrs Montagu's brother, Matthew Robinson, informed her that Betty Lumley was "now married to a parson who once delighted in debauchery, who is possessed of about £100 a year in preferment, and has a good prospect of more. What hopes our relation may have of settling the affections of a light and fickle man I know not, but I imagine she will set about it, not by means of the beauty, but of the arm of flesh. In other respects I see no fault in the match; no woman ought to venture upon the state of Old Maiden without a consciousness of an inexhaustible fund of good nature." And shortly afterwards the great Mrs Montagu herself thus comments in a letter to her sister: "Mr Sterne has one hundred pounds a year living, with a good prospect of better preferment (*sic*). He was a great rake, but, being jappened and married, has varnished his character. I do not comprehend what my cousin means by their little desires; if she had said little stomachs it would have been more help to their economies, but when people have not

enough for the necessities of life what avails it that they can do without the superfluities and pomps of it? Does she mean that she won't keep a coach and six and four footmen? What a wonderful occupation she made of courtship! But it left her no leisure for anything else I wish they may live well together"¹

Elizabeth Lumley soon recovered, and, in an age of feminine abeyance, she herself proposed to her grateful lover the Assembly Rooms, it is said, were the scene. This speaks something for her will, perhaps aided by the "arm of flesh" which her kinswoman commemorates and the legacy which she had just received. From those Assembly Rooms the pair hurried straight to the minister, and were married by special licence on March 30, 1741, the then Dean officiating. Her wilful suitor professed himself enraptured, and he was in that mood which he depicted long after disillusionment set in. "Hail, ye gentle sympathies," he tirades, "that can approach two humble hearts to each other, and chase every discordant idea from an union that Nature has designed by the same happy colouring of character that she has given them!"² And at this very moment Sterne wrote, picturing the future and transported with the prospect,—“Yes! I will steal from the world, and not a babbling tongue shall tell where I am—Echo shall not so much as whisper my hiding-place,—suffer thy imagination to paint it as a little sun-gilt cottage on the side of a romantic hill,—dost thou think I will leave love and friendship behind me?”—he always couples the two—“No! they shall be my companions in solitude, for they will sit down and rise up with me in the amiable form of my L— We will be as merry and 'as innocent as our first Parents in Paradise before the wretched Fiend entered that indescrib-

¹ Mrs Climençon's *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. 1. pp 73-4.

² *Original Letters*, 1788, p 30

able scene. The keenest affections will have room to shoot and expand in our retirement, and produce such fruits as madness, and envy and ambition have always killed in the bud.—Let the human tempest and hurricane rage at a distance : the desolation is beyond the horizon of peace.—My L. has seen a polyanthus blow in December, some friendly wall has sheltered it from the biting wind. No planetary influence shall reach us but that which presides [over] and cherishes the sweetest flowers. God preserve us ! How delightful this prospect is in the idea ! We will build and we will plant in our own way,—simplicity shall not be tortured by art ;—we will learn of nature how to live—she shall be our alchemist, to mingle up the good of life into one salubrious draught—the gloomy family of care and mistrust shall be banished from our dwelling, guarded by thy kind and tutelar deities ;—we will sing our choral songs in gratitude, and rejoice to the end of our pilgrimage. Adieu, my L. Return to one who languishes for thy society.” Yet, as time wore on, these songs of gratitude broke into discord. Sterne tuned his pipe for other ears and forsook the house of his pilgrimage. Arcadia palled, and the entrancing shepherdess appeared a beldame. Dazed by the zigzags of the wayfarer’s sentiment, she half lost her reason and was content to fare on without him.

But before the matrimonial knot was tied, Sterne seems to have travelled for some months abroad as tutor to a young pupil. The youth whom he attended was probably Lord Aboyne, whose chaplain he had been appointed, and probability points to an earlier date than has been conjectured.¹ Twice in *Tristram Shandy* does Sterne refer to

¹ Professor Cross puts it immediately after the wedding. But the Sternes appear to have settled down at once to their parish life, and he would hardly have left his bride.

the asthma which he contracted while "skating against the wind in Flanders",¹ and several foreign allusions in the early part of that work, together with a familiarity, seemingly personal, with places both French and Flemish, make it certain that he had taken that trip long before ill-health drove him abroad. There are glimmers of Ghent (though Sterne in childhood may have gleaned Uncle Toby's allusions from his father), and references to old French castles, even a mention of Rome and Loretto. His quality of bear-leader is one to which he recurred much later in his career, when he still hoped for an opportunity of conveying a young gentleman about Europe.

This first journey was notable, for it set him thinking, gave him the zest to roam and a foretaste of sentimental travel. The peep that he gives of it, moreover, is introspective—it occurs while he moralises over his self-appointment as "the King's Chief Jester." It is worth mentioning, too, that the Mr "Noddy," whom he piloted in the tour, reappears in Hall-Stevenson's so-called *Moral Tales*.

"I had just time (he says) in my travels through Denmark with Mr Noddy's eldest son, whom in the year 1741 I accompanied as governor, riding along with him at a prodigious rate through most parts of Europe, and of which the original journey performed by us two will be given in the progress of this work, I had just time, I say, and that was all, to prove the truth of an observation made by a long-sojourner in that country—namely 'That Nature was neither very lavish nor was she very stingy in her gifts of genius and capacity to its inhabitants,—but like a discreet parent was moderately kind to them all, observing such an equal tenour in the distribution of her favours as to bring them in those points pretty

¹ *Tristram Shandy*, vol. i p. 16, vol. viii p. 19.

near to a level with each other,' so that you will meet with few instances in that kingdom of refined parts ; but a great deal of plain household understanding amongst all ranks of people, of which everybody has a share, which is, I think, very right. With us, you see, the case is very different ;—we are all ups and downs in this matter ;—you are a great genius ;—or 'tis fifty to one, sir, you are a great dunce and a blackguard,—not that there is a total want of intermediate steps. . . . But the two extremes are more common, and in a greater degree in this unsettled island, where Nature in her gifts and dispositions of this kind is most whimsical and capricious ; Fortune herself not being more so in the bequest of her goods and chattels, than she." And then follows his estimate of himself. "This is all that ever staggered my faith in regard to YORICK's extraction. . . . For happen how it would, the fact was this— that instead of the cold phlegm and exact regularity of sense and humour you would have looked for, in one so extracted ; —he was, on the contrary, as mercurial and sublimated a composition,—as heteroclite a creature in all his declensions ; —with as much life, and whim and *gaieté de cœur* about him ; as the kindest climate could have engendered and put together. With all this sail poor YORICK carried not one ounce of ballast ; he was utterly unpractised in the world : and at the age of twenty-six knew just about as well how to steer his course as a romping, unsuspecting girl of thirteen. So that upon his first setting out the brisk gale of his spirits, as you will imagine, ran him foul ten times in the day of somebody's tackling ; and as the grave and slow-paced were oftenest in his way—you may likewise imagine 'twas with such he had generally the ill-luck to get the most entangled. For aught I know there might be some mixture of unlucky wit at the bottom of such *Fracas* :—For to speak the truth, YORICK had an invincible dislike and opposition in his

nature to gravity,—not to gravity as such,—for when gravity was wanted he could be the most grave or serious of mortal men for days or weeks together, but he was an enemy to the affectation of it, and declared open war against it, only as it appeared a cloak for ignorance or for folly, and then, whenever it fell in his way, however sheltered and protected, he seldom gave it much quarter. Sometimes in his wild way of thinking, he would say that gravity was an arrant scoundrel, and he would add,—of the most dangerous kind too,—because a sly one, and that he verily believed more honest and well-meaning people were bubbled out of their goods and money by it in one twelve-month, than by pocket-picking and shop-lifting in seven. In the naked temper which a merry heart discovered, he would say, There was no danger—but to itself—whereas the very essence of gravity was design and consequently deceit, 'twas a taught trick to gain credit of the world for more sense and knowledge than a man was worth and that with all its pretensions—it was not better, but often worse, than what a French wit had long ago defined it, *viz A mysterious carriage of the Body to cover the defects of the Mind*—which definition of gravity, YORICK, with great imprudence, would say deserved to be wrote in letters of gold. YORICK had no impression but one, and that was what arose from the nature of the deed spoken of, which impression he would usually translate into plain English without any periphrasis—and too oft without much distinction of either personage, time, or place,—so that when mention was made of a pitiful or ungenerous proceeding—he never gave himself a moment's time to reflect who was the Hero of the piece—what his station—or how far he had power to hurt him hereafter,—but if it was a dirty action,—without more ado,—The man was a dirty fellow—and so on,—and as his comments usually had the ill fate to be terminated either in

a *bon mot*, or to be enlivened throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to YORICK's indiscretion. In a word, though he never sought, yet at the same time, as he seldom shunned occasions of saying what came uppermost and without much ceremony ;—he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour,—his gibes and his jests about him—they were not lost for want of gathering." They certainly were not

In "Yorick," Hamlet's jester and Shandy's clergyman, Sterne depicts the best part of himself, just as in the child Tristram he sometimes depicts the worst. These are not the sole occasions where Sterne dwells on his Yorick. He recurs to it in that part of the *Sentimental Journey* where he observes that the French are apter to "conceive" than to "combine," and at the same time rallies a bishop for despising his homilies : "'Good my Lord,' said I, 'but there are two Yoricks. The Yorick your lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years after he flourished in Horwendillus's court. The other Yorick is myself, who have flourished, my lord, in no court'—he shook his head. 'Good God,' said I, 'you might as well confound Alexander the great with Alexander the coppersmith.'"

How true is the self-appraisalment of the first quotation ? Sterne here (and elsewhere) protests himself a son of the South, doomed somehow to the North's chill counterblasts ; he repudiates the law of "gravity," and throws down the gauntlet against seriousness ; yet he owns to a sober strain, though he limits it by weeks. Sterne certainly could be solemnly pert and frivolously solemn, and in both capacities he was arch and demure. He was an ironist with a touch of the poet in him, an adorer of beauty, a detester of the formal. And more than once he wrote, and well wrote, of his function, that every time a man

smiles, and more so when he laughs, he "adds something to this fragment of life"¹ This was what he termed the true Shandyism, which "opens the lungs and heart," and his commentators have usually claimed for him an animal exuberance This can certainly be claimed for Rabelais, who shakes the spheres with his gross laughter But was Sterne quite so joyous as he fancied? I think not He had the potentiality, but not the physical power, for the romp of spirits they were not animal His gaiety was that of sickly genius wrestling with disease, disorder, and *ennui* He professes too much mirth to be credited with its full possession He smiles rather than laughs, and his humourous wit is a protest against his frail constitution This was no jolly wassailer, not even a pococurante, but a poor consumptive court-fool with or without his cap and bells The chords of his pathos underlie all his grotesque twists, which are themselves pitched in a minor key His tears and "sensibility" are not merely April showers, the whole purport of his *Sentimental Journey* was to show how these can cement strangers together His tears, he once wrote, were "perpendicular" and "hit his horizontal spirits" at right angles And of his sensibility he said that though it had often made him wretched, he would not exchange it "for all the pleasure the grossest sensualist ever felt" Has he not confessed, even while descanting on the spell of high spirits, that the very sound of "gaiety" always associates itself with the "spleen"? "It is true," he added in another place, "I love laughter and merry-making, and all that as well as any soul upon earth, nevertheless I cannot think of piping and taboring it out of the world like the figures in Holbein's Dance"² He did not belong to summer,

¹ *Original Letters*, 1788, p 7 He also introduced it into one of his dedications

² *Ibid.*, p 23

though none could better irradiate the landscape with laughing sunshine. You get it in the Peasant's Grace, which in truth was a dance ; you get it when he wrote that "a man may laugh and sing and dance too, and after all go to heaven." You get it when he wrote in another letter : "How often have I seen at a York Assembly two young people dance down thirty couples, with as grave a countenance as if they did it for hire, and were after all not sure of being paid. And here [in France] have I beheld the sunburnt sons and daughters of labour rise from their scanty meal with not a pulse in their hearts that did not beat to pleasure and, with the brightest looks of satisfaction, make their wooden shoes responsive to the sound of a broken-winded haut-boy."¹ Above all, you get it in that magic scene of the sunburnt daughter of Languedoc.

Sterne sought after the joy of living just because he had it not, and he satisfies the want by his incomparable union of words and feelings. The emotion sports hand in hand with the sign ; they dance a saraband together. Perhaps this is so with most great humourists, for humour means the quick apprehension of opposites, and sunbeams are more sparkling on a dark surface. Of sentimental *chiaroscuro*, he was a master. Heine well observed of "the child of tragedy," that Mnemosyne kissed him with her rosy lips till "his heart and his mouth were at singular variance. Just when the heart bled most tragically, then to his own surprise the flippant laughter fluttered from him."²

Sterne here also protests his pure simplicity. "Simplicity," he remarks in one of his sermons, "is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of anything in this silly

¹ For the sentence *cf* *Original Letters*, pp 152-6 The picture of the Peasant's Grace comes, of course, from the *Sentimental Journey*

² *Cf* Heine's *Über Deutschland*, p 232

world, it should be of this honest alliance " Was he quite so unpractised as he pretends ? Spontaneous he certainly was, under the promptings of a nomad impulse that felt the moment and scampered after it But was he free at any time from that morbid self-consciousness which undoes simplicity ? A more self-centred man never existed, and his left hand loved to know what his right was doing He could not be generous without acting as his own audience "If a man," he wrote in a letter describing how he had sent a "poor client" back to his home with his comfort and his bond restored, "if a man has a right to be proud of anything—it is of a good action, done as it ought to be without any base interest lurking at the bottom of it", and he adds characteristically, "Bravo, Bravo !"¹

His sympathy depended on attraction What fascinated him, he crept towards, nor was his course ever direct There is too much of veiled uneasiness to erase the background of design Rousseau was the same All that Sterne urges against "gravity" may be pressed against simplicity also his, dwelt in externals, and was often that of an *ingénu* But this innate uneasiness, audible in all his whisperings, never disfigures his grace of manner—a grace rarely linked to so much whim And in that combination perhaps resides his personal charm He has himself penned an apotheosis of courtesy "Hail ye small sweet courtesies of life, for smooth do ye make the road of it ! Like grace and beauty which beget inclinations to love, it is sweet, 'tis ye who open this door and let the stranger in "²

We left the Sternes married. That midsummer they spent at his parish of Sutton-in-the-Forest-of-Galtrees, where Sterne, for all his irregularities, was long a punctual and

¹ *Sterne's Letters*, 1775, p. 43

² *Sentimental Journey*, vol. 1. p. 161

punctilious minister, though delicate health compelled him to employ a curate.¹

Bridegroom and bride were not yet disenchanted, the future beckoned cheerfully, and the voice of the turtle was heard in their land. His tumble-down vicarage was scarcely then "a sun-gilt cottage," but they were contented. Few clouds lowered on the horizon which York bounded. He and she both attended the bedsides of suffering, where he rehearsed his coming elegiacs. Of literary aptitude he seems as yet to have been unconscious. For some years no child was born to them, and they took their frugal ease in the country, their scanty pleasures in the town. This was not to last. The sirens played perilous melodies in Laurey's ears. "You will, I am sure," he was to write, "more than understand me when I mention that sense of female perfection—I mean, however, when the female is sitting or walking beside you,—which so possesses the mind that the whole Globe seems to be occupied by none but you two ;—when your hearts in perfect unison, or I should rather say harmony, produce the same chords,—and blossom with the same flowers of thought and sentiment." This was not written of Mrs Sterne. How changed the scene, when, a quarter of a century onwards, he seems to have looked back on his desentimentalised wife as "a fume of a woman," and sighed that he had been "forced into marriage by the thunder of the Church to a tempest of a woman" !²

¹ At £10 a year For Sterne's punctiliousness *cf* his letter to the Rev Mr Blake from the series first given by Mr Fitzgerald in his *Life*, p 93 "I know you excuse Formalities of which by-the-bye I am the most punctilious regard of withal" And this is borne out by the general tenor of his correspondence On one exceptional occasion, however, years onwards, and in London, he turned up too late to preach a charity sermon at the Foundling Hospital, but this was after time and engagement books were engrossed by applicants

² *Cf* the fragment of "The Notary and his Wife," *post*, Chapter XIII

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVAL (1741-1759)

YEARS of prosaic amity and commonplace occupation were to elapse before the real Sterne appeared in *Tristram Shandy*. In the very year of his wedding the Sutton vicar, who had obtained the prebendal stall of Givendale, was able to exchange it for the better one of North Newbald with its accompanying Stonegate House in York, and he could now take his turn at city preaching. Three years later,¹ through his wife's influence with Lord Fairfax, he further received the adjacent living of Stillington, which introduced him to Squire Stephen Croft, the well-to-do brother of an Oporto wine-merchant. Stephen was very friendly with Sterne, who passed many a pleasant evening by the Hall fireside; but when the younger brother, John, returned to England, he heard much gossip about Sterne's doings and misdoings, and this remains in two or more letters to Caleb Whitefoord, the ally of Goldsmith, a wine-merchant, diplomatist, and party-leader.

But Sutton, on the other hand, brought Sterne into collision with its testy squire, Philip Harland (and into reconciliations with him), over land bargains, common enclosures, and, curious to add, over music. As prebend and double incumbent, Sterne now enjoyed an income of some £80, while his wife's was also at his disposal. With a revenue of about £120 a year he held himself above the pinch of poverty, while he hoped much from land speculations and dairy-farming.

A little Lydia, who died early, was born in October 1743, and in 1746 came another, to whom Mrs Montagu consented to stand godmother. The sister's name was dear to Mrs Montagu's heart.

Sterne bestowed great pains on his garden, for which, in course of time, he even invented appliances. Mingled with his irregularity, there was always something of the mechanical inventor, and this turn was to find ample expression in *Tristram*. As for literary performance, it was confined to the York pulpits, till the political sequels of 1745—which drove his friend Stevenson into action—sent Sterne into fights political on behalf of his terrible old uncle Jaques. For eighteen years—from 1741 to 1759—Sterne remained obscure, and he remained reputable, of Hall-Stevenson for many years he saw nothing. The man who was to forfeit respect in the future was still a credit to his cloth—"known for his good life and conversation," as the sentence ran in the Dean and Chapter's verbose certificate¹. As for his countenance, it did not yet wear the frail, queer, caustic expression that marks Reynolds's first delineation. Rather, it was a worldly, amused face with the contradiction of poetical eyes, the visage of Cotes's earlier presentment. Nathaniel Hawthorne noted something of this contrast.

¹ For this and some other details of Professor Cross's *Life*, pp 50-55

when this likeness was shown to him in England,¹ and the reader who here looks on it for the first time will note other differences also. There is much more morbidity in Sir Joshua's portrayal, and there is far less ease. The sickly parson did not benefit by the social racket. Sterne was not quite certain of his new part.

Only occasional peeps are possible of the protracted interval that separates long obscurity from final fame. We see Sterne stickling for his vocation. Everyone recollects the anecdote, published by Hall-Stevenson, of his reply to the young blasphemer in the Coney Street coffee-house. Sterne told him of his dog, an excellent pointer, but cursed with one infernal fault: "He never sees a clergyman but he immediately flies at him." "How long may he have had that trick?" asked the coxcomb. "Sir, ever since he was a puppy," rejoined the vicar. Dr Johnson, who hated Sterne, would surely have applauded him here.

We see the odd, gaunt Yorick going his rounds on "as lean and lank and as sorry a jade as HUMILITY herself could have bestrided," which, in the fitness of his humour, he gave "fifty reasons" for not decking with the fine saddle and bridle that he had purchased in the "pride and prime of life." He "never could enter a village, but he caught the attentions of both old and young—Labour stood still as he passed—the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well,—the spinning-wheel forgot its round—even chuck-farthing and shovel-cap themselves stood gaping till he got out of sight; and as his movement was not of the quickest, he had generally time enough upon his hands to make his observations—to hear the groans of the serious and the laughter of the light-hearted,

¹ Cf. Hawthorne's *Our Old Home* ("A Pilgrimage to Boston" reprint), p 134

all which he bore with excellent tranquillity —His character was,—he loved a jest in his heart” Not without reason did Sterne dub the hero of his book “Shandy,” which is Yorkshire for “a wee bit daft”

We see him “skaiting” on the Car at Stillington, falling into the ice, and left helpless amid the staring bystanders, who were divided in their allegiance¹ We see him bargaining for queer tomes of ancient learning and animating their dust We see him driving into York for the concerts, sauntering into bookshops and coffee-houses, visiting his friends Blake, Taylor, and Fothergill, or mountebanking it with his co-jester, Thomas Bridges, as he does in their joint caricature of the clown and “Macaroni” on the stage, with the whole York fair, and all the fair of York, for audience “He loved a jest in his heart,” and in a paper, which he drew up for his wife’s provision, he expressly mentions this painting among his treasures, adding that he had given it to a lady²

We see him (all through the ’forties) consorting with John Blake, the scholar-clergyman who was neither a pedant nor a prude, whose attentions pleased Sterne’s bristling wife, and whose recourse to Sterne’s counsel must have kept a sense of self-respect alive Many a jovial evening they passed together A new letter to him gives wind of one of these junketings “I hope,” writes Sterne, “you got your coat home safe, tho’ in what Plight I fear, as it was a rainy night and ten o’clock at night before we reached Sutton ow[e]ing to vile accidents to which Journiers are exposed” And then follows a parenthetical jest quite of the Tristram order “Will you be so kind as to forward

¹ Cf *Whitefoord Papers*, p 231

² These are the interesting memoranda of 28th December 1761 Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 270

the note to Mrs Cowper's any time before noon. *There is no note enclosed.*"¹

We see him hob-nobbing with Maimaduke Fothergill, one of those true friends, Yorick was to write, that envied him, a close correspondent to the last, and the recipient of letters among Sterne's best. And, in 1756, he comes across the young Romney, then apprenticed to the vagabond painter, Christopher Steele, who dubbed himself a count, and eloped with the daughter of a York citizen. In Steele's temporary studio Sterne could indulge his artistic leanings, and sympathise with the struggling genius bound hand and foot to a charlatan. Romney did not forget these meetings. He lived to paint several scenes from *Tristram Shandy*, which were afterwards raffled for, to defray his expenses.² One of these pictures portrayed Slop's arrival at Shandy Hall. It would be interesting to compare Romney's delineations with Hogarth's grotesques, and to know whether Gainsborough, who was to strike up a warm friendship with the author, ever tried his hand at illustrating any part of his work. Whither have these Romney illustrations flown, and where, too, is the portrait which Steele painted of Sterne long before he was famous? All his life the artistic impressionist gravitated towards artists, just as, on another side, he gravitated towards sporting squires and jovial parsons.

We see him starting a Sunday covey of partridges as he trudged over the turnips to Stillington with his pointer at his heels. At once he hurries home for his gun and leaves his expectant congregation in the lurch. But we also see him helping to rescue Blake from the toils of lawyers and match-makers, and this correspondence shows

¹ Sterne to the Rev J Blake, "Monday" From the collection of Mr H H Raphael, M P The Cowpers were great friends of Mrs Sterne This letter also mentions Oldfield the York postmaster

² So said Richard Cumberland Cf Professor Cross's *Life*, p 111

that Sterne's uncommon "sensibility" did not exclude a shrewd common sense. We see him almost as yokel, threshing his barley, repairing his house, and renewing his garden—in two years expending close on £14 over fruit trees and an "espalier apple hedge" for his orchard. The orchard is not without import, for it gave Sterne the hint for what seems to have been his first essay in dream and fantasy. The piece is noteworthy, and deserves more attention than it has received.

The vicar, writing that he has just been "sporting himself with some wild Fancies,"—they were Fontenelle's—strolls out of his study one midsummer night, and "stoops" musing among his plum trees. Thus pensive, he gazes up at the stars, and asks, as to-day we ask about Mars, why should they not be peopled?

"The inhabitants of the most inconsiderable planet that revolves round the most inconsiderable star I can pick out of this vast number, look upon *their world*, I warrant you, as the only one that exists. They believe it the centre of the Universe, and suppose that the whole system of the Heavens turns round them, and was made, and moves purely for their sakes. So considerable do they imagine themselves, as doubtless to hold that all these numerous stars (our sun amongst the rest) were created with the only view of twinkling upon such of themselves as have occasion to follow their cattle late at night." And then Sterne clearly remembers a line from Pope, prompted by Bolingbroke, "We, on this isthmus of a middle state." "We are situate" (he says) "on a kind of isthmus which supports infinity."

It is hard to say which side of the prospect strikes the imagination most, whether the solar system or a drop of pepper affords a nobler subject of contemplation, in short whether we owe more to the Telescope or the Microscope.

Pursuing this notion of a microcosm to the absurd, he

plays with it in a passage that may have suggested one in *Tristram*. It follows a reference to that essay where Addison depicts Mahomet spirited up to the seventh heaven, yet returning in an instant of time to find his bed still warm, and the water unspilt out of an overturned pitcher. "On one side," Sterne writes, "infinite Power and wisdom appear drawn to *full extent*; on the other in miniature, the infinitely *strong and bold Strokes* there, the infinitely *nice and delicate Touches* here, show equally in both the definite end. . . . I leave it to future ages to invent a method for making a MINUTE seem a YEAR."

So perpend the comic philosopher, adding that he could conceive two nations on each side of a green leaf as valorous as Alexander, and an *Iliad* in the sphere of a nutshell. And then he yawns; it was time for slumber. Here the tone changes with the scene, and the poet within him begins to dream. He finds himself in "a new state of being" with no memory of pre-existence. In its empyrean he discerns greater and lesser lights—"Second Stars," as he calls them. These several orbs mean the fruit, the branches, and the play of the leaves under the moon. And so Sterne reduces the universe to a plum-tree.

A new world plunges him, first in follies, and then in natural philosophy. But, like Faust, he can make little out of it save "a heap of unintelligible jargon." Disillusion sets him roaming "in quest of knowledge." Instead of knowledge he finds "only a vain affectation of misery in order to gain the veneration of the vulgar and thereby serve the ends of Government." Suddenly the configuration of the sky changes. The stars behind, seem lower; those in front, higher. "A huge *dusky* veil like a Cloud which was only tinsel'd over with a faint glimmer of light, was rising upon the Heavens." This phenomenon was the solid earth, covering the backward "luminanes," and reveal-

ing new but familiar stars He has returned whence he set out, but he fares no better Convinced that the world is a globe, he is nearly burned For "three or four ages," therefore, he retires into contemplation, fearing lest "the great light should sink under the dark veil and leave us in eternal night" Then he returns to the world, only to find that great revolutions had happened Religion has yielded to free thought, and now was the time for his scientific theories "The Raillerie of free thinkers," however, persecutes him as much as the old "fury of bigots" A small party of the broadminded support him, but an irruption of barbarians once more expels him to another country There he opens a school, but fails to persuade mankind that "the Second Stars are worlds inhabited like ours" While "the wits" deride him a sudden streak of light crosses the dusky veil This was, in truth, the daybreak piercing the plum-tree's foliage, but the dreamer fancied it a vast planet ushering in a golden age A fancy follows so akin in spirit to Heine's much weirder dream of the end of the world as to emphasise their partial affinity, though Sterne cannot compare with him as thinker or poet

A cataclysm impended "At this time began to be heard all over the world a huge noise and fragor in the skys as if all nature was approaching her dissolution The stars seemed to be turned from their orbs, and to wander at random thro' the Heavens I fixed my attention upon a constellation of the Second Stars," which "seemed to suffer some cruel agitation" Several shot off and forsook the rest By slow degrees all these lights "were lost in the great dark veil" "And now the fragor increased The world was alarmed, all was consternation, horror and amaze, no less was expected than a universal wreck of nature" In this crack of doom the dreamer awoke with a start, to find himself in bed Off he hurried to the orchard, and "by a

sort of natural instinct made to the plumb-tree" of his "last night's reverie." He observed the face of the heavens unaltered: "A brisk gale of wind, which is common about sun rising, was abroad!"

"I recollected a hint"—Sterne afterwards "recollected" more—"I recollected a hint that I had read in *Fontenelle*, who intimates that there is reason to suppose that the Bloom on Plumbs is no other than an immense number of living creatures." He climbed the tree and examined the position of the fruit:—"I found that they hung in the same position, and made the same appearance as the constellations of Second Stars I had been so familiarly acquainted with, excepting that some few were wanting, which I myself had seen fall. I could then no longer doubt how the matter was." His visionary "plumb-land" had symbolised space, and he ends in a pathetic strain which separates him from the reeling satyrs of "Crazy Castle," and shows that he loved nature and pathos more than Swift or Fontenelle. It is a poetic epilogue:—"Oh World! wherein I have spent so many happy days! oh! the comforts and enjoyments I am separated from; the acquaintances and friends I have left behind me there! Oh! the mountains, rivers, rocks and plains, which ages had familiarized to my view! With you I seemed at home; here I am like a banished man; everything appears strange, wild and savage! Oh, the projects I had formed! The designs I had set on foot, the friendships I had cultivated! How has one blast of wind dashed you to pieces! But thus it is, *plumbs* fall and *planets* shall perish. . . . The time will come when the powers of heaven will be shaken, and the stars shall fall like the fruit of a tree when it is shaken by a mighty wind."¹

¹ This manuscript fragment, addressed to Mr Cook of York, was first published by M. Paul Stapfer in his *Laurence Sterne, sa Personne et ses*

This essay shows many characteristics of Sterne's future style. Mark in the closing part, the scriptural and musical influence. Mark in the earlier, the particularity that lends likelihood to fiction—the constellations of "Second Stars" in the plum corresponding to those in the skies, "*excepting that some few were wanting, which I myself had seen full.*" Mark, too, the certainty of the cowherds that the stars only twinkled for such as "follow their cattle late at night." Swift was an expert in the little-great, but Swift was not a poet, and he never romanticised his art. And the close sounds the sentimental note, though, to the present peace of the Sterne household, it misses the love-motive. With it included, however, Sterne finds the style which Thackeray copied. Take, in advance, a piece from *Tristram Shandy* about its "Jenny" and Sterne's "Kitty"—a piece so modern in vein yet so like a morsel of Catullus—"Time wastes too fast, every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen, the days and hours of it more precious—my dear Jenny—than the rubies about thy neck are, flying over our heads like light clouds on a windy day, never to return more,—everything presses on—whilst thou art twisting that lock, see! it grows grey, and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to the eternal separation which we are surely to make

"Heaven have mercy upon us both!"

The same subdued tone found early utterance as he buried his parishioners. The verses occasioned by hearing

Ouvrages (1870). It came into his hands through a friend who received it from a lady at York. Though unsigned, the autograph seemed entirely Sterne's. I agree with Professor Cross (pp 144-9) in considering the fragment genuine, if only on internal evidence. Dr J B Brown has published the whole in his edition of Sterne's works (1885). In the original, zodiacal signs indicate "God," "world," and "soul," while there are further abbreviations.

a pass-bell, which were printed in an antiquary's volume over sixty years ago, demonstrate the protest that he could be "grave." Throughout his life Sterne tried his hand at verses, few of which remain, though he plumed himself on his muse. There are the lines to Julia in *Tristram Shandy*. Twice repeated and twice applied is an epitaph on the death of a lady which he quotes in his letters. And there is a trifle, beginning "The lark hath got a shrill fantastic pipe," which biographers have missed, though it has been attributed to Sterne.¹ But none of them display the pathetic solemnity of these, some of which have a ring almost of "Omar Khayyam." Here again Sterne muses on the peopling of infinity :—

"Hark ! my gay Friend, That solemn toll,
Spreads the departure of a soul ,
'Tis gone, that's all we know—not where
Or how the unbodied soul does fare—
In that mysterious world none knows
But God alone to whom it goes ,
To whom departed souls return
To take their doom, to smile or mourn

Oh ! by that glimmering light we view
The unknown world we're hastening to !
God has locked up the mystic page,
And curtained darkness round the stage !
Wise heaven to render search perplex
Has drawn 'twixt this world and the next
A dark impenetrable screen ,
All behind which is yet unseen.

.
This hour perhaps our Friend is well
Death struck, the next he cries ' Farewell !

¹ Cf *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, i 388.

I die ! ' and yet for ought we see
 Closes it once to breathe and be —

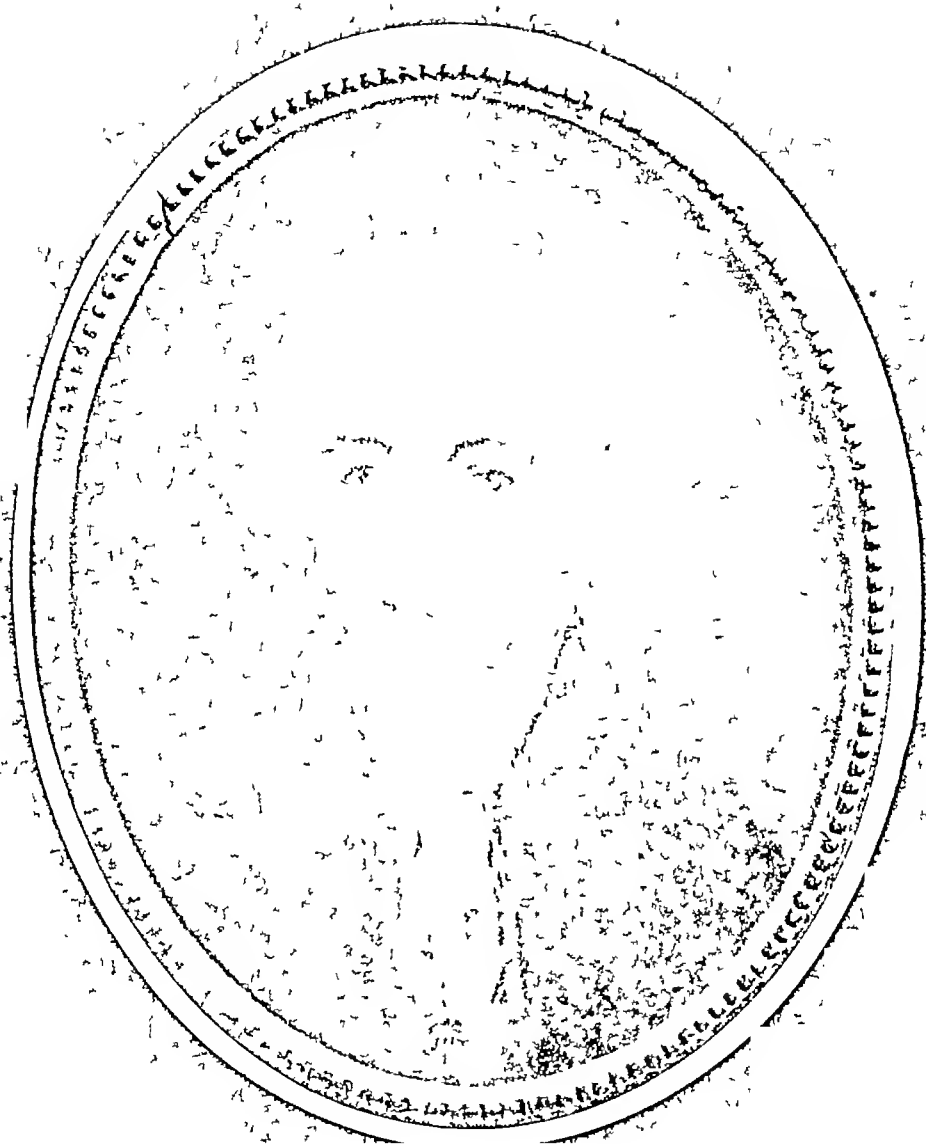
Swift flies the soul—perhaps 'tis gone
 A thousand leagues beyond the sun,
 Or twice ten thousand more thrice told
 Ere the forsaken clay is cold !
 And yet who knows if friends we loved
 Tho' dead may be so far removed ,
 Only the veil of flesh between
 Perhaps they watch us, though unseen,
 While we, their loss lamenting, say
 They're out of hearing far away ,
 Guardians of us, perhaps they're near
 Concealed in Vehicles of air,
 And yet no notices they give ,
 Nor tell us where nor how they live "

From such heights we must descend to agriculture Sterne's farming and his wife's dairy proved failures She undersold the neighbours and grew unpopular, though her geese were famous and welcomed by her friends That Sterne found small comfort in the poultry appears from a passage in *Tristram* where, after praying Heaven to prosper the manufacture of paper "under this propitious reign," he says "As for the propagation of Geese I give myself no concern—nature is all-bountiful—I shall never want tools to work with" And we can still hear the shrill Elizabeth, standing arms akimbo on his threshold and bidding him pluck the quills of the geese that were being driven round their lawn "Powl 'em, Laurey, powl 'em !" as John Croft gives her exclamation in his gossip to Whitefoord

Sterne reaped little but loss, and long afterwards he

dissuaded a friend from repeating his experiment. "You are much to blame," he wrote, "if you dig for marle unless you are sure of it. I was once such a puppy myself as to pare and burn, and had my labour for my pains and two hundred pounds out of pocket. Curse on farming (said I), I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. The following up of that affair (I mean farming) made me lose my temper and a cartload of turnips was I thought very dear at two hundred pounds. In all your observations may your own good sense guide you. Bought experience is the devil."

Try he did whether the pen would not profit more than the spade before he realised his power in fiction. He demeaned that pen to party warfare, but his first literary efforts were his sermons ; and, in tracing the phantasmagoria of twenty years, the preacher and his preaching must not be relegated to the tail-end of a chapter.



LAURENCE STERNE

From the original portrait in crayons by Francis Cotes
(In the possession of the Reverend G. W. Blenkinsop)

CHAPTER VII

THE PREACHER

“PREACHING, you must know,” Sterne told the Treasurer of the Foundling Hospital, whose inmates must have moved him, “is a theologic flap upon the heart” A heart-flapper Sterne remained in his gown as in his cassock Dr Johnson once condemned these discourses as only froth on the cup of salvation But in truth they were not the froth on any cup, they scarcely profess to quench a spiritual thirst Rather, they were like Bishop Berkeley’s Tar-water with which Sterne used religiously to dose himself after all-night sittings Or, to vary the metaphor, they resemble the cupboard where Yorick kept his Sunday crockery It was refreshing for him each Saturday night to dust and examine his curiosities—some of them, it must be owned, exact replicas of ancient models But the china figures of saints and heroes made some amends for the rest of the week, and he could sob as he surveyed them From the virtues he would single out Charity, for he himself was charitable, and when he kindled over the specimens of the vices, his wrath would be reserved for those sordid sins to which he was least inclined, though in one instance—this Foundling Hospital appeal—he did lay stress on “the treachery of the senses”

Sterne’s pulpit gleanings succeeded better than his temporal harvests Yet he was no born orator Indeed,

according to John Croft, "his delivery and voice were so very disagreeable" that half the congregation usually left the church when he rose.¹ But half remained, and these were the more cultivated. Sometimes he drew large audiences, while from 1747 onwards his sermons found their way into the press and gained a wide attention. Two only were published separately; the rest appeared much later in series. Many of them did double duty, being repeated to his parishioners also; and as for texts, has he not told us in the *Sentimental Journey* that "Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia" is "as good as any one in the Bible"? How they would be composed as he jogged along on his broken-down jade, he has chronicled in *Tristram Shandy*; and he was proud of the fair handwriting in his manuscript—a fact which has not escaped those pages.² One of them—the sermon on "Conscience"—figures bodily in the narrative. Few will forget how it fluttered from the volume of Stevinus (the first projector of an air ship or "chariot"); air, as Sterne remarks, being cheaper than horses. This was the book which Corporal Trim fetched at the bidding of his master; and all will remember Trim's attitude as he delivered the discourse, and the interjections of his hearers. As a rule, Sterne's sermons teach little beyond proverbial prudence, and seem, as it were, his briefs for a somewhat worldly heaven. They were orthodox enough. But there are exceptions, and most of them contain dramatic or human touches, while all are distinguished by that oddity which even now seems odd, but which must have irritated the Georgians.

The sermon in point—that which Trim repeated—was preached as late as 1750 before the judges of assize. It is numbered twenty-seven in the collected edition, and

¹ *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 231

² Yorick's funeral sermon on poor Le Fevre

through its insertion in the novel offended the clergy But Voltaire, in that article of his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* which deals with the subject, extols the author, and the French Rationalist subscribed for the last instalment of Sterne's sermons He comments on the part concerning conscience as a deceiver "The best that has ever been said on this important subject," he remarks, "is to be found in the comic book of *Tristram Shandy*, written by a clergyman named Sterne The works of this second 'English Rabelais' [Swift was the first] resemble those little satires of antiquity which held precious essences in their phials Two old half-pay captains [here Voltaire trips, Walter Shandy was a merchant], assisted by a Dr Slop, propound the most ridiculous questions as to problems which our own theologians have not been spared At length they make a Corporal read them an old sermon on Conscience composed by Sterne himself Among many pictures presenting the paintings of *Rembrandt* or the sketches of Callot [this conjunction is curious], he draws the portrait of an upright man of the world consuming his days in the pleasures of the table, gaming and dissipating, doing nothing that good company reproaches, and consequently never reproaching himself His conscience and honour follow him to his pleasures, especially when he pays liberally He punishes the mean rascals who come before him severely He lives gaily and dies without a touch of remorse Dr Slop then interrupts the reader to assure him that such a death could never happen to an Anglican, but is peculiar to a Papist In due course Sterne cites the example of *David*, who had, he says, a conscience at once sensitive and callous, illuminated and darkened When he could kill the king in a cave he was contented to cut off a piece of his robe But he passes a whole year without the slightest twinge for the seduction of Bathsheba and the murder of

Uriah. . . . Such, he says, are the majority of mankind. We agree with the parson that the great of the world are often in this case. The torrent of pleasure and business carries them away. They have no time for conscience, however well conscience may serve for the people. . . . It is therefore good *sometimes* to awaken the consciences of sempstresses and kings by a moral that can impress them, but to do so, the language of our day must be bettered."

So much for Voltaire on a sermon including a passage on the Inquisition, which it is strange to find overlooked. Voltaire's praise implies Dr Johnson's censure. In Boswell's pages, Dr Johnson only met Sterne once, and then to amend the English of a dedication to Lord Spencer, which, however, evidently stands as it was written. There is some reason to believe that the great moralist met the great impressionist again at Oxford, and one cannot blame Johnson for disliking so loose a parson. But Yorick's homilies are mild as milk. Some—Mrs Delany among them—would have it that a laugh trembled on his lips, and that the folly-tipped rattle lay in the hands that fingered the pages. In reality, Sterne most restrained himself in the pulpit, and his rather Tupperlike reflections give the sole pretext for Goldsmith's absurd verdict that he was "dull." Johnson's aversion was to the preacher, not to the lectures. He denied, indeed, that he had ever read them. But, when pressed home, he saved his sincerity by admitting that once he had skimmed them in a stage-coach: no other place on earth could have driven him into the perusal. And this was the occasion when he answered the young Miss Monckton (Lady Cork), protesting her partiality: "That is, dearest, because you are such a dunce."

It was not Sterne's sentiment that the sage hated: did he not assure Mrs Thrale that he, too, could be a good

"feeler" ? What Johnson reprobated in Sterne (and in Swift) was that a clergyman should so behave and keep such company, that he should be both frivolous and profane, although Johnson condoned profanity in Gibbon. The great censor called him "the man Sterne," and he protested that his fame would pass. This, however, is one of many in his long chapter of wrong prophecies, though here, as always, he expressed the voice of a true citizen. He was our jury incarnate, and Sterne was certainly guilty of not keeping his calling holy. But he set great store by his sermons—he told his Eliza that they came "all hot from the heart"—and they were popular with the ladies. His favourite, as he assured his daughter, was one of his earliest—that on the "House of Feasting and the House of Mourning." It does not, however, rise above graphic platitude¹. It lacks the psychology of some others, and their occasional glimpses of Yorick under his gown. But it is distinguished by a typical trick—that of controverting his text at the outset. In this case it was a verse from Ecclesiastes: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting," and he sets out with the words "That I deny." Nor is this instance out of gear with the man, it was the neurotic denial of one whose rule was a repugnance to pain. Sterne repeats this trick of denial in the "Conscience" sermon preached on "For we trust we have a good conscience", and in *Tristram* he makes Dr Slop perceive that the writer is a Protestant "by the snappish manner in which he takes up the Apostle." Another pet sermon of Sterne's was the charity sermon on "Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath," preached at St Michael's Church, York—a treatise on compassion which

¹ The best sample perhaps occurs in the sermon on "St Paul and Felix," where he psychologises the Roman judge as grasping, but observes that avarice is merely an ancillary vice that ministers to some ruling passion

he published in 1741, and much later laid at the feet of his "dear, dear Jenny." It was a *billet doux*, like that which, years later, he offered to "Eliza."

The best, however, are those which concern himself or portray human nature. The one on "Time and Chance" suggests something of his own circumstances. He describes a man starting life with every worldly advantage, and then he paints a contrast of the reverse:—"He shall come into the world with the most unpromising appearance—shall set forwards without fortune, without friends—without talent to procure him either the one or the other;—nevertheless you will see this clouded prospect brighten up insensibly, unaccountably, before him; everything presented in his way shall turn out beyond his expectations;—in spite of that weight of insurmountable difficulties which first threatened him—time and chance shall open him a way." Another passage from another sermon—that on "The Prodigal Son"—fits his own case also. He is considering "that fatal passion which led the Prodigal—and so many thousands after his example—to gather all he had together and take his journey into a far country." Though the sermon is mainly a guide to the grand tour, the sentimental wayfarer emerges.—"The love of variety, or curiosity of seeing new things, which is the same or at least a sister passion to it—seems wove into the frame of every son of Adam; it is one of 'Nature's liberties.'" And once more, his sermon on "The History of Jacob" strikes—and in a nobler strain—the note which permeates all his gay defiance of suffering, which mixes pain with pleasure and pleasure with pain, which makes him grieve whenever he has not "turned diseases into commodity," the note which inspires even for the down-hearted and hysterical a chant of rapture. And this was the very note which drew praise from the pagan Goethe.—

“Grant me, Gracious God, to go cheerfully on the road which thou hast marked out!—I wish it neither more wide, nor more smooth—Continue the light of this dim taper thou hast put into my hand—I will kneel upon the ground seven times a day, to seek the best track I can with it—And having done that, I will trust myself and the issue of my journey to thee, who art the Fountain of Joy,—and will sing songs of comfort as I go along”

This is a serene philosophy, though the preacher, it is true, sang queer “songs of comfort” as he ambled on in *Tristram* and the *Sentimental Journey*. But Corporal Trim, and Uncle Toby, and the pathos of Le Fevre are, surely, fraught with some tiny foretaste of the supreme Fountain!

“Whatever is the proportion of misery in the world,” he continues—and whenever he touches this theme he is delightful—“whatever is the proportion, ’tis certain that it can be no duty of religion to increase the complaint,—or to effect the praise which the Jesuits’ College of Granada gave their Sanchez—that though he lived where there was a sweet garden, yet he was never seen to touch a flower, and that he would rather die than eat salt or pepper or aught that might give a relish to their meat. I pity the men whose natural consciences are burdens, and who fly from joy (as these splenetic and morose souls do) as if it was really an evil in itself. If there is an evil in this world, it is sorrow and heaviness of heart—the loss of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only evils as they occasion sorrow, take that out, and the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man. Poor unfortunate creature that he is! As if the causes of anguish in the heart were not enow,—but he must fill up the measure with those of caprice, and not only walk in a vain shadow,—but disquiet himself in vain too!”

The furnace of trial was far from Sterne's musings. Yet he tried hard to warm both hands at it, and, if he had no full *joue de vivre*, at least he vibrated to the moment. In a preceding sermon, however, he *has* recognised, in words at any rate, the purifying power of grief:—

“Strange that we should only begin to think of God with comfort when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing else. Man surely is a compound of riddle and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet unless he suffers in the flesh he will not cease from sin, though it is sure to bring pain and misery upon his head for ever.”

Sterne never dwelt on the goods of life as evils; it was their misuse that, with a grave face, he reprimanded. We find him so doing in the sermon upon Dives:—“That he had received his good things,—’twas from Heaven, and could be no reproach. With what severity soever the Scripture speaks against riches, . . . all this is not laid to him as a sin, but rather remarked as an instance of God’s blessing . . . ; and whenever these things are otherwise, ’tis from a wasteful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends,—and oftentimes, to the very opposite ones for which they were granted—to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.” Here is the keynote of the *Sentimental Journey*.

His own dual nature underlies his pulpit philosophy. “’Tis the necessity,” he says in the same sermon, “of *appearing* to be somebody in order to be so,—which ruins the world.” He knew, or at any rate came to know, despite his pleas of oddity, that his deeds contradicted his professions. But he also knew that his life seldom contradicted his feelings, the true pivots on which he hinged—so that he may almost be figured as a kind of “honest Joseph Surface.” After he had become famous, he preached a

notable discourse before the Paris Embassy His theme was "Hezekiah and the Messengers," his text, "And he said, What have they seen in thine house ? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in my house have they seen , there is nothing amongst all my treasures that I have not shown them " Sterne opened with " And where, you will say, was the harm in all this ? " But from his main path—the dangers of prosperity—he soon strayed to pursue the contrasts in human nature In that quest he seems to recognise the frank Sterne as well as the furtive, the pure Sterne as well as the impure " We are a strange compound," he ponders, " and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into whatever we do, that not only in momentous concerns where interest lists under it all powers of disguise,—but even in the most indifferent of all our actions not worth a fallacy, by force of habit we continue it , so that whatever a man is about—observe him,—he stands armed inside and out with two natures , an ostensible one for the world,—and another which he reserves for his own private use —This you may say the world has no concern with , it might have been so , but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world and stealing from it a character instead of winning one, we give it a right and a temptation along with it to enquire into the affair The motives of the one for doing it are often little better than the other for deserving it Vanity bids all her sons be generous and brave and her daughters chaste and courteous—But why do we want her instructions ?—Ask the Comedian who is taught to play a part he feels not—Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough ? God ! Thou knowest they carry us too high , we want not to be, but to seem ! " He dramatises the knave and the hypocrite " With what an inflexible sanctity of

deportment he sustains himself as he advances. Every line in his face writes abstinence ;—every stride looks like a check upon his desires ! See, I beseech you, how he is cloaked up with sermons, prayers and sacraments ; and so bemuffled with the externals of religion that he has not a hand left to spare for a worldly purpose ! Is there no serving God without all this ? Must the garment of religion be extended so wide to the danger of its rending ?—Yes, truly, or it will not hide the secret : And what is that ?—That the saint has no religion at all.” And then he vindicates sentimentality. “One honest tear shed in private over the unfortunate is worth it all.”

So Sterne scathes the Pharisee ; but he himself proved a Pharisee of feeling. The Biblical Pharisee clung to outward forms, Sterne, to inward sensations, and both read these into religion. Small trace of the publican is discoverable in the preacher. He seldom stands convicted of sin, or, rather, he seeks to reconcile right and wrong by his emotional medium. Yet his sermons deserve notice, if only for their self-revelation. Perhaps this state-sermon, delivered abroad to versed men of the world, displays the keenest knowledge of mankind. The stress, it will be marked, is laid not so much on the hypocrisy of pretensions as on their mixed consequences—the mongrel brood of distorted motives.

“What a problematic set of creatures,” he reflects, “does simulation make us ! Who could divine that all that anxiety and concern so visible in the airs of one-half of that great assembly, should arise from nothing else but that the other half of it may think them to be men of consequence, penetration, parts and conduct ? What a noise about the claimants ! Behold Humility out of mere pride ! And honesty almost out of Knavery ! Chastity, never once in harm’s way ! And Courage, like a Spanish soldier upon an

Italian stage, a bladder full of wind ! Hark ! that,—the sound of that trumpet,—let not my soldier run,—’tis some good Christian giving alms ! Oh Pity ! Thou gentlest of human passions, soft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with so loud an instrument Imposture is all dissonance, let what master soever of it undertake the part, let him harmonize and modulate it as may be, one tone will contradict another ’Tis truth only which is sustained and ever in harmony with itself
Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it, wrest it into ungenerous hands, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy Undo it all, I beseech you Give him back his honour—restore the jewel you have taken from him !—replace it in the eye of the world, it is too late ”

But Sterne does not restrict himself to such dramatisations Sometimes in these sermons he develops theories as wayward and absurd as those of his own Walter Shandy In one, he even affirms that sympathy improves the constitution While he preached, the critics—uncomprised in his love of man and beast—were mute His homilies are not literature, though to them is due the deep acquaintance with Scripture language which enriched his style, and the Bible-assonance that converted a proverb of Provence, “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” almost into a text¹

That his preaching vein was instinctive, is shown by an early love-letter to Miss Lumley, referring to checks in the course of courtship After pleading guilty to “an indictment in the High Court of Friendship,” and deprecating “a too easy pardon,” “a miser,” he tells his “contemplative girl,” “a miser says, though I do not give of my money to-day, to-morrow shall be marked with some deed

¹ This phrasing of “tempers the wind” will be found long before, in a Rabelaisian fragment presently to be noticed

of beneficence.—The libertine says let me enjoy this week in forbidden and luxurious pleasures and the next I will dedicate to serious thought and reflection.—The Gamester says let me have one more chance with the dice and I will never touch them more.—The Knave of every profession wishes but to gain independency, and he will become an honest man.—The Female Coquette [and here Yorick is profounder] triumphs in tormenting her inamorato, for fear after marriage he should not [and Sterne did not] pity her.”¹ These are the stock instances of his sermons, and a seam of them—taken from Bishop Hall—runs through in a late volume of *Tristram Shandy*.

He frankly owned a plagiarism which annexed sentences from several divines. The third-rate, who always love to detect the second-hand, charged him with more ; and Sterne made merry in his *Tristram* over the long pedigree of quotations—“from India to Persia, from Persia to Greece, from Greece to Rome, from Rome to France, from France to England,”—“so things come round.” He plagiarised from Wollaston, as in his books he took ideas from D’Urfey and older authors. But he transformed them by his manner, and one instance may serve to show the valuelessness of such charges. Burns is said to have appropriated his “guinea’s stamp” from a sentence in Sterne’s dedication of the story of Le Fevre. But the same notion occurs in Wycherley and even earlier.

Sterne himself has laughingly owned—and this has escaped remark—that Dr Clarke (the logical pedant) was a favourite tap. The retort comes from an early fragment in the style of Rabelais, and it is a plea for plagiarism to the rescue “Homenas” is himself. The phrasing is fully Sternian, and the humour of Shandy’s own :—

¹ *Letters of the late Mr Laurence Sterne, etc, published by his daughter, Mrs Medalle* (1775), vol 1 pp 38-9

"Homenas, who had to preach next Sunday (before God knows whom), knowing nothing at all of the matter—was all this while at it as hard as he could drive in the very next room—for having fouled two clean sheets of his own, and being quite stuck in the entrance upon his *third division* and finding himself unable to get either forwards or backwards with any grace,—‘curse it,’ says he, (thereby excommunicating every mother’s son who thought differently) ‘why may not a man lawfully call in other help in this as well as in other human emergencies?’ So starting up and nimming down Clarke—tho’ without any felonious intention of so doing, he had begun to clap him in , and because there was a confoundedly high gallery was transcribing it away like a little devil—‘Now,’ quoth Homenas to himself, ‘tho’ I hold all this to be fair and square yet if I am found out, there will be the deuce and all to pay—*Why are the bells ringing backwards, you lad? What is all that crowd about, honest man?*—Homenas was got upon Dr Clarke’s back, Sir—*And what of that, my lad?*—*Why, an please you, he has broke his neck and fractured his skull and befouled himself into the bargain by a fall from the pulpit two storeys high* Alas! Poor Homenas! Clarke has done his business Homenas will never preach more while breath is in his body "

This fragment was not lost in *Tristram Shandy* —

"‘I am to preach at Court next Sunday,’ said HOMENAS, ‘run over my notes’ So I hummed over Dr HOMENAS’s notes—two modulations very well—’twill do, HOMENAS, if it holds on at this rate—so on I hummed—and a tolerable tune I thought it was, and to this hour, may it please your Reverences, had never found out how low, how flat, how spiritless and jejune it was, but that all of a sudden up started an air in the middle of it, so fine, so rich, so heavenly it carries my soul up with it into the other world "

None the less, Yorick was not without his ideal of the preacher's office. "Sermons," he says in *Tristram*, "should come from the heart, not the head.—To preach to show the extent of our reading, or the subtleties of our wit,—to parade it in the eyes of the vulgar—beggarly gains of a little learning, tinselled over with a few words that glitter but convey very little light and less warmth—is a dishonest use of the poor single half hour of the week which is put into our hands. It is not preaching the Gospel—but ourselves."

Sterne preached his York sermons sometimes in the Church of St Michael-le-Belfrey, sometimes in the York Minster, and often he preached them as the substitute for big-wigs who had nothing to say, or something more agreeable to do. In this connection an amusing episode survives in a long letter, shortly to be noticed, to Francis Blackburne, then Archdeacon of Cleveland and the successor of Sterne's uncle, Dr Jaques. This Blackburne must not be confused with Lancelot, the old Archbishop. He had died in 1743, and been replaced by the placid Herring, also a Jesus man and a staunch favourer of Sterne. By 1750, the date of this letter, Herring had been translated to Canterbury, and Matthew Hutton reigned in his stead. Sterne's communication to Blackburne will not be clear without taking stock, as briefly as may be, of his attitude to the tiresome Cathedral circle.

John Fountayne was now Dean in place of that Richard Osbaldestone to whom Sterne dedicated his charity sermon on "Elijah and the Widow." Fountayne, an old college acquaintance, was still his very good friend, though from Mrs Montagu's correspondence we glean that these relations were not to last. Sterne hacked for the Dean, as for others. He composed the Latin oration requisite for his Doctor's degree, he fought his battles; but he was not to secure his

gratitude These things were to come What concerns the present juncture, however, is only that during this year of 1750 Fountayne claimed a right against his Archbishop of appointing the Cathedral preachers

Besides these patrons, Sterne could now boast Sir William Penniman, a neighbouring gentleman who appointed him chaplain, and the first Earl of Fauconberg, who had already tried to present him with the adjacent living of Coxwold, which he did not manage to do till after the publication of *Tristram*, for the nonce, however, he contented himself by conferring two "commissaryships" on Sterne—semi-civil appointments entailing visitations of the clergy and some censorship of district morals¹

He was not yet considered a bad shepherd Lord Fauconberg oppressed him with attentions, and, in a future letter, Sterne wrote that he found these attentions oppressive It was something for a stiff nobleman in a dull countryside to take "a peep into the world as into a show-box," as Sterne elsewhere phrased it, with a wit like Yorick for moraliser and showman

At present he basked in Cathedral sunshine, his friends at court were manifold But for some three years a black cloud had been threatening his horizon This portent was none other than Dr Jaques Sterne, the Precentor, who at length played the part of wicked uncle to the babes in the wood of Sutton Uncle Jaques (a very cormorant) had retained Sterne to write weekly pamphlets and paragraphs ever since the rising of 1745 had turned zealots for Walpole into prosecutors and persecutors of Jacobites and Papists Saul of Tarsus never persecuted heretics more fiercely than the relentless Jaques, who was as insatiable in clapping recusants into jail and striving to suppress a Catholic girls' school as (like Earl Nelson long

¹ For details of Professor Cross's *Life*, pp 92-3

after him) he was insatiable—and unsuccessful—in soliciting preferments. The nephew's zeal had pleased his uncle in the election of 1741—a test election after Walpole's downfall—and in coming years he still subserved the old man's fury, hoping doubtless to profit by it. Among its temporary victims was the York leech and antiquary, Dr Thomas Burton, an inditer of medical works with preposterous titles. Laurence Sterne would not let the physician alone, even after his uncle had done with him as a Jacobite spy. He hounded him with vindictive raillery in *Tristram Shandy*, where he stands pilloried as Dr Slop, the man-midwife.

All these hostilities arose from Laurey's forced apprenticeship; but suddenly, whether from disgust or ambition, he kicked against the pricks, and refused to abet his uncle's *auto-da-fés*. He was "tired," he wrote, of employing his "brains for other people's advantage." "'Tis a foolish sacrifice," he adds, ". . . . made for some years to an ungrateful person."¹ "He quarrelled with me," is his own version in the memoir drawn up for his daughter, "because I would not write paragraphs for the newspapers,—though he was a party man, I was not, and detested such dirty work, thinking it beneath me—from that period he became my bitterest enemy." The protest sounds plausible; but a party man, if actions are sound evidence, the vicar himself had been. And there were other contributing causes to their rupture: one of them, if the gossip of John Croft be true, not very creditable to either of the parties,² while the other concerned the nephew's behaviour to his importunate mother.

Such, then, was Sterne's position when he took up his pen to complain of the behaviour of one Hildyard, a York

¹ Letter to Mrs F—— [query, Fothergill], "York, Tuesday, Nov. 19, 1759"

² The scandal had reference to a lady, cf the *Whitefoord Papers*, p 225

bookseller who had set up as a sort of broker for these "preaching by proxy" proceedings. This document, from the Egerton Manuscripts of the British Museum, has been published (in part at least) both by Mr Fitzgerald and Professor Cross. But it sheds so much daylight on the York landscape that it must be retranscribed. Its capitals and punctuations follow Sterne's own sweet will,¹ and it should be premised that Dr Jaques Sterne wrote afterwards, and had probably written before, that he would rather preach himself than allow "the only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy nephew of my own," to take his turn in the pulpit.²

Sterne's refusal to serve him as mercenary pamphleteer was the chief cause of the bully's wrath. The start is not too lucid —

"SUTTON, *Nov 3rd, 1750*

"DEAR SIR,—Being last Thursday at York to preach the Dean's turn, Hildyard, the bookseller, who had spoke to me last week about Preaching yours, in case you should not come yourself, told me, he had just got a letter from you directing him to get it supplied—But with an intimation that if I undertook it, that it might be done in such a way, as that it might not Disoblige your Friend the Precentor. If my doing it for you in any way could possibly have endangered that, my Regard for you on all accounts is such, that you may depend upon it, no consideration whatever would have made me offer my Service, nor would I upon any Invitation have accepted it, Had you incautiously press'd it upon me, And therefore, that my undertaking it at all, upon Hildyards telling me He should want a Preacher, was from a knowledge that, as it could not in Reason, so it could not in Fact, give the least Handle to what you apprehended. I would not say this from bare Conjecture But known Instances,

¹ Cf Eg MS, 2325, f 1

² *Ibid*, 2325, f 3

having preach'd for so many of Dr Sterne's most Intimate Friends since our Quarrel without their feeling the least marks or most Distant Intimation, That he took it unkindly. In which You will the readier believe Me, from the following convincing Proof, That I have preached the 29th of May, the Precentor's own turn, for these two last years together (not at his Request, for we are not upon such Terms) But at the request of Mr Berdmore¹ who is of a gentle and pacific temper [?and] would not have ventured' to have ask'd me to preach it for him the 2nd. Time which I did without any Reserve this last Summer. The Contest between Us, no Doubt, has been sharp, But has not been made more so, by bringing our Mutual Friend into it, who in all things (except Inviting us to the same Dinner) have generally bore themselves towards Us, as if this Misfortune had never happened, and this, as on my side, so I am willing to suppose on His, without any alteration of our Opinions of them, Unless to their Honor and Advantage, I thought it my Duty to let you know, How this matter stood, to free you of any unnecessary Pain, which my Preaching for you might Occasion upon this score, since upon all others I flatter myself You would be Pleased, As in general it is not only more for the Credit of the Church, But of the Prebendary himself who is about to have his Place supplied by A Prebendy. of the Church where He can be had, rather than by Another, tho' of equal Merit." After this rigmarole comes his encounter with Hildyard, upon the "Insufferableness of whose Behaviour" he dilates with graphic indignation. "Hildyard," he says, "gave himself out as the Archdeacon's 'Plenipo'; how far his Excellency exceeded his instructions you will perceive from the account I have given of the hint in your letter, which was all the foundation for what pass'd. . . . I step'd into his Shop just after

¹ A Prebendary of York.

[the] Sermon *All Saints* when with an air of much Gravity and importance, He beckon'd me to follow Him into an inner Room, No sooner had he shut the Dore, But with the awful Solemnity of a Premier who held a Lettre de Châchet [*sic*] upon whose Contents my Life depended—after a Minute's Pause—He thus open'd his Commission Sir, my friend the A-Deacon of Cleveland not caring to preach his Turn, as I conjectured, His left me to provide a Preacher, But before I can take any Steps in it with Regard to you—I want first to know, Sir, upon what Footing you and Dr Sterne are? Upon what Footing! Yes Sir How your Quarrel stands? What's that to you? How our Quarrel stands! What's that to you, you Puppy? But Sir, Mr Blackburn would know—What's that to Him?—But Sir don't be angry, I only want to know of you whether Dr Sterne will not be displeased in case you should preach—Go Look, I've just now been preaching and you could not have fitter Opportunity to be satisfied,—I hope, Mr Sterne, you are not angry Yes, I am, but much more astonished at your *Impudence* I know not whether the Chancellor's stepping in at this Instant and flapping to the Dore, did not save his Tender Soul the pain of the last Word However that be, he retreats upon this unexpected Rebuff, takes the Chancellr aside, asks his Advice, comes back Submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr Her[r]ing¹ had quite satisfied himself as to the grounds of his Scruple (tho' not of his Folly) and therefore beseeches me to let the Matter pass, and to preach the Turn, when I—as Percy complains in *Harry ye* 4

““ All smarting with my wounds
To be thus pestered by a Poppinjay
Out of my Grief and my Impatience

¹ From the date of the letter, Herring was now Archbishop of Canterbury, but presumably remained Chancellor of the York diocese

Answered neglectingly, I know not what.
 for he made me mad
 To see him shine so bright and smell so sweet
 And Talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman,
 Bid him be Gone, and seek Another fitter for his Turn.'

"But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my Case, so I was proud to tell him in plain Prose though somewhat elevated—That I would not preach, and that he might get a Parson where he could find one. But upon reflection that Don Joh[n] (*torn*) had certainly exceeded his instructions, and finding it to be just so, as I had suspected—There being nothing in your letter but a cautious Hint—And being moreover satisfied in my mind, from this and twenty other Instances of the same kind, That this Impudence of his, like many Others, had issued not so much from his Heart as from his Head, the Defects of which no One in Reason is Accountable for, I thought I should wrong myself to remember it, and therefore I parted friends and told him I would take care of the Turn, wch. I shall do with Pleasure.

"It is Time to beg Pardon of you for troubling you with so long a Letter upon so little a Subject—Which as it has proceeded from the motive I have told you, of ridding you of Uneasiness, together with a Mixture of Ambition not to lose either the good Opinion or the outward Marks of it from any man of worth and character till I have done something to forfeit them, I know your Justice will Excuse.

"I am Revd. Sir with true Esteem and Regard of wch I beg you'l[l] consider this Letter as a Testimony yr. faithful and most Affte. Humble Servt.

"LAU : STERNE.

"P.S.—Our Dean [Fountayne] arrives here on Saturday. My Wife sends her Respects to you and yr. Lady."

The whole scene rises before us the fussy yet servile bookseller, the timid Archdeacon, the Precentor bullying in the background, and the whimsical parson, hat-in-hand to the worldly bread-giver, though his obsequiousness pales in comparison with the truckling that marked the necessitous curate of this period¹

Nor are personal touches missing Sterne's war with "gravity" can be traced to its source, while the distinction between the follies of the head and those of the heart is the same antithesis which, towards the close, made his apology for his lapses. The one most pressed against him was his alleged treatment of his mother. Another long letter—from Sterne to his uncle Jaques—goes far to excuse it. Both lapse and letter have been ably handled by Professor Cross, but they must be treated afresh, for both help to explain the antecedents of *Tristram Shandy*.

¹ A pamphlet satire in verse of 1765, entitled *The Angel and the Curate*, by Nathaniel Weekes, depicts the miserable shifts and the cruel insolence which caused them, on the part of those "who smoke the parson in his shirt." Cf also Shenstone's remarks about "the journeyman parson" in Hull's *Select Letters* (1778)

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNSENTIMENTAL CASE OF STERNE'S MOTHER

HITHERTO Sterne's poor mother, Agnes, and his sister Catherine have been lost in the dust of his controversies and the mists of his sentiment.

"From my father's death," he wrote, "to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish her with money, I seldom heard from her, and when I did, the account I generally had was that by the help of an Embroidery school that she kept, and by a punctual payment of her pension, which is £20 a year, she lived well and would have done so to this hour, had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England."

This we have seen her doing ineffectually. Henceforward, outside a few sidelights, our chief authority will be the substance of Sterne's appeal to his uncle during April 1751—a communication which in great measure absolves him from the sneer of Horace Walpole and Byron's epigram that Sterne starved a living mother while he whined over a dead ass.¹

It does not, however, wholly acquit him ; some lack of

¹ This letter, large portions of which have been cited both by Fitzgerald and by Cross, is to be found in Add MSS 25,479, f 121. It bears date 5th April 1751.

natural affection remains All that his slender purse allowed, he did, though he was hampered by his wife's repugnance to such waste of money But he had scant love for a mother who had neglected him, nor could he harbour much sympathy with the seamy side of her situation No sooner had Sterne married a pseudo-fortune, than his mother and sister magnified the bride's dowry, and in 1742 resolved to quarter themselves on the young couple Sterne had hoped that their difficulties were past he was always willing to spare Agnes what he could, provided she would spare him her company

"I trust," he wrote much later to a York friend, whom he and his wife had driven over to visit, "that my poor mother's affair is ended to our comfort and, I trust, to hers" But the affair was never ended, and small comfort ensued in the future

When the son heard of her landing, he posted to Liverpool, and spent three days urging her to return to a country where a maintenance was assured, and convincing her of the fact that beyond his wife's and his own pittance, he had no outside resources He was, he urged, bound to respect the provision of one who had generously refused a settlement on her marriage He gave his mother clothes and the considerable present of twenty pounds, he plied her with persuasion But remonstrance proved in vain Directly she had got the money into her pocket, "she told me with an air of the utmost insolence, that as for going back to live in Ireland, she was determined to show me no such sport, that she had found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at ease either at York or Chester" If Sterne's wife grew into a vixen, a vixen his mother seems to have remained all her life long

The sentimentalist did not wish to inflict on his well-

born helpmate the vulgarity of his low-born mother : indeed, had he desired it, as he ought to have done, re-crimination would have been loud and prolonged.

Sterne could not induce Agnes to go back to Ireland, but he did induce her to remove to Chester. "I concluded," he says, "with representing to her the inhumanity of a Mother *able* to maintain herself thus forcing herself as a burden upon a Son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me." Scarcely a dutiful speech ; but it should be borne in mind that Mrs Sterne, by her previous marriage with Captain Hebert, had a son to whom she might as naturally have turned. "I took my leave," adds Sterne, "by assuring her That though my income was so strait, I would not forget that I was a son tho' she had forgot that she was a mother."

But the woman whose whole life had been a battle, and who had experienced little but insult from her husband's kindred, would place no trust in Laurence, nor could the proud Catherine rest satisfied with ordinary assistance. For some three years this unamiable pair stayed on at Chester, remonstrant pensioners. In 1744, however, they took another ply. The widow despatched her daughter (at the son's expense) for a month's visit to Sutton, with the design of working at one stroke both on the brother's pity and the uncle's passion. Sterne had hitherto bestowed no less a sum than ninety pounds on his family ; yet now, despite indorsements on bills drawn by him in their joint favour, Agnes denied receipt, and persisted in an endeavour to set two taps flowing at the same time. Sterne surely does not exaggerate when he terms this behaviour an "ungenerous concealment." The sister too was cunning, and the sorrows of Agnes Sterne were exploited by the cruel old man to the

nephew's discredit, so that a fresh sting was thus added to his rupture with the Precentor. It is an unpleasant story, nor have we evidence on the other side. If we had, it would probably amount to little more than the sad want of affection between Sterne and his nearest kindred, or a recital of those quarrels that usually attend generosity without feeling. But it seems fairly clear that Sterne's mother and sister clutched all they could and then prejudiced the sinister uncle against their prey.

During the Sutton visit, the Sternes formed several plans for Catherine's advancement. They offered that if she would go to London as milliner and mantua-maker, she should be allowed thirty pounds a year (almost the "fortune" of Mrs Sterne) until business should come in, and, further, they promised to equip her with the needful outfit. Or, if she preferred an opening in "the family of one of the first of our Nobility," Mrs Sterne (and here surely Mrs Montagu intervenes) would get her "a creditable place," where she would receive not less than eight or ten pounds a year together with other advantages. This post was probably one as housekeeper or confidential maid, nor must the salary be judged by its modern value. The Montagu correspondence mentions just such a place with just such remuneration, gratefully and happily accepted by a well-bred spinster. Sour Lady Disdain, however, despised unpretending employment. She answered her brother with scorn, and told him that he might send his own children to service, when he had any, but for her part, as she was the daughter of a gentleman, "*she would not disgrace herself*, but would live as such" and this she did after her sister-in-law had exerted herself to secure the possibility of both her offers. Despite Catherine's pride, Sterne still continued to send, and she to take, his bounty. The sequel is strange, and has passed unnoticed. If John Croft's gossip

holds good,¹ the aspiring damsel ended by marrying "a publican in London," and this disgrace was pressed against Sterne's paper-humanity by malicious or ignorant contemporaries.

It would be interesting to know whether, when the author hurried up to London in 1760 to find both himself and his fame, he visited his sister's ale-house. Such low connections, it might be feared, would shock a sensibility too fine for workaday wear, though, up to the last ebb of his life, Sterne protested that his feelings were too "nice" for "this world," and that the "world" had "killed him." Such might have been our conjecture, yet there is a trace of new evidence to the contrary. In a remarkable paper which Sterne drew up in December 1761, when he thought himself dying, he expressly implored his wife to benefit Catherine: "Leave my sister something worthy of yourself," he begs, "in case you do not think it right to purchase an annuity for your greater comfort; if you chuse that—do it in God's name."² After this avowal, it can scarcely be held that Sterne's feelings never extended to actions.

Four years elapsed before Agnes Sterne reappeared at the critical moment when Dr Jaques most raged against his rebellious nephew. This time she managed thoroughly to poison his mind. In vain did the yet friendly Fountayne seek to heal these dissensions. Son, mother, and exasperated uncle remained irreconcilable. Although Sterne contrived to settle eight pounds a year on the widow, things went from bad to worse. Dr Sterne came to hate Laurence the more because some *protégée* got mixed up in their quarrel. And, to make the scapegrace or scapegoat a public example, he

¹ Cf *Whitefoord Papers*, p 231

² For this new document, already mentioned and afterwards to be quoted in other connections, cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. II pp 270-2

clapped the poor old lady (now reduced to set up as a laundress) either in Ousebridge jail, or perhaps in some York almshouse, for no offence but her destitution¹ How this was compatible with old Mrs Sterne's "pension," whether she had mortgaged it, or how she had forfeited it, goes unexplained, nor in the son's recapitulation of the circumstances is there one word about this imprisonment or his desertion, if the tale be true, the catastrophe seems antedated. A subscription was set on foot, and the old lady must have resumed her soap-suds, but among the dirty clothes in her basket, her son's character went uncleansed. The uncle took good care that he should be held up to odium, though he himself confessed that Agnes Sterne was rapacious. The forlorn woman must have cursed the day which related her to those domineering Sternes. Two things, however, seem patent. Dr Sterne was rich and childless, and he had contributed nothing to her support, while he had used her misery as a lever for the persecution of her son. That son, still comparatively poor, had now a beloved child to provide for, and, so far as his own pocket extended, he had emptied it. A right-down good fellow, it will be thought, would have sheltered the poor old thing under his roof, despite a wife unconsulted in other matters of "sentiment." Sterne's point, however, was that he had done what he could.

"Was I, Sir, to die this night," he remonstrated with his uncle, after urging his gratitude to his wife, "was I, Sir, to die this night, I have not more than the very income of £20 a year (which my mother enjoys) to divide equally betwixt my wife and a helpless child and

¹ John Croft says, "the common goal [*sic*] at York," and adds that she died there, which does not seem to have been the case. The Rev Daniel Watson, vicar of Leake, writing in 1776, says that the place was Ousebridge prison. Cf Professor Cross's *Life*, p. 103. He is by far the best authority on this subject.

perhaps a third unhappy sharer, that may come into the world some months after its father's death to claim its part. The false modesty of not being able to declare this has made me thus long a prey to my mother, and to this clamour raised against me ; and since I have made known this much of my condition as an honest man ; it becomes me to add, that I think I have no *right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child ; and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my mother's pension when I have so much to leave my wife who besides the duties I owe her of a husband and the father of the dear child, has this further claim ; that she whose bread I am thus defending was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised so much sorrow upon that score, brought not one sixpence into the family,—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that she was the daughter of no other than a poor Suttler, who followed the camp in Flanders, was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a fourth part of that the Government allows her ; and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision, though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife." Sterne signs himself, "Your once much obliged though now injured Nephew."

He had contending duties—that is true ; and it is also true that, however he misbehaved, neither to his wife, nor mother, nor to the world at large, was he ever niggard, while his affection for his daughter was intense. Embarrassed as he found himself, he was precise in payment, and only one loan—twenty pounds from Garrick—has even been alleged as unpaid. He does not rank among the sentimental

debtors, but his emphasis on his own mother's failure to bring sixpence into the common stock hardly fits an apostle of feeling. In the whole kaleidoscope of his word-colours, he has never painted the *Distressed Mother*, though in one of his letters he depicts, with satisfaction, the death-bed of a woman whose last hours he comforted by promising to care for her child. Had he left us the harrowing picture, it is not hard to fancy its purport. How archly he would have railed at casting up accounts! How he would have poised the treasure in one scale and the tears in the other! How he would have rhapsodised on the contrast between the young mother's rapture over her new-born babe and the groans of the grey-haired matron in her house of bondage! How he would have sighed over the thought that youth and age were both cruel, yet both tender! And how soon he would have frisked off to warn (and warm) his "dear, dear Jenny" or "Eliza"! To sip the sweets of pathos is one thing, to feel and bear its burden, another.

And yet he did not abandon Agnes Sterne. Years rolled by, and we find him writing that he has been to visit the poor old thing, and that her fears are by this time allayed. Time brings reconciliation. His friend Blake acts as peacemaker, and by 1758 the mother accepts her son's allowance. In the year which saw the death of the malignant uncle who left his wealth to his housekeeper, and for whom Sterne refused to wear the prepared mourning, —in the May of 1759, she breathes her last, and is buried in the very church where the son had preached his homily on "Compassion"¹

Poor, fighting, bitter mother! Strange, hardened, softened son! Who shall keep pace with such capriccios of sentiment or follow the dance of their demi-semiquavers!

And still we have not reached that crucial year of 1760,

¹ Cf. Professor Cross's *Life*, pp. 117-84

when Sterne may be said to have been born in the first two volumes of *Tristram*. Yet another effusion of his—a preliminary canter in the Shandean field—belongs to the year 1758, and claims notice. It is the satire, only posthumously printed, of *The History of a Good Warm Watch-coat*—the satire which Sterne burned and told Mrs Montagu that he deeply regretted.¹ Nor will this prelude alone lead us straight up to *Tristram*; there are two more turnings from the direct road. Sterne's wife must be repictured, and the episode of his "dear, dear Kitty," before he emerges. Such peep-holes into personality will serve to elucidate the startling contrast between the middle-aged parson and the young lion of a London season.

¹ Sterne also composed another trifle, an "Impromptu" on a coat drenched by the rain, communicated by a "Mr P" to Sterne's daughter, who included it in her edition of his *Letters* (1775), vol iii p 157

CHAPTER IX

“THE HISTORY OF A GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT,” TOGETHER
WITH ONE OF THE BAD WARM “DEMONIACS”

POLEMICAL satires are usually tedious the events which started them have vanished, and they are dust So it happened even with Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, and in a brochure like this, dealing with petty politics, the posthumous flatness is the more patent Such jokes have ceased to be practical Like stage tattle, they evaporate with the actors, the scenery has mouldered, and little lingers but remembrance

The brisk fusillade in question ended a wordy warfare of some eight years between the Cathedral dignitaries and their leading lawyer, Dr Topham, who goes down to posterity as the “Didius” of *Tristram Shandy*

Topham was a Goliath of sinecures no one could be more official Commissary and Keeper General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York, official to the Archdeacon, official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding, official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland, official to the Precentor (and to be Dr Sterne's official was to be an official indeed), official to the Chancellor, and official to several of the Prebendaries There is a smack of smugness in the very sound of these revenues, and the collector of them should have rested content, but he was voracious Long had he fixed his gaze on two small commissaryships—the trifling one (only £6 a year) which fell to

Sterne, and another (of £20) which was reserved for a Dr Mark Braithwaite, and at his death assigned to a William Stables.

Dean Fountayne suspected Dr Topham's designs, and when Hutton became Archbishop, Topham too, as his counsel in the law, kept an eye on one who was not unlike Trollope's Archdeacon Grantley.¹ Topham haunted Bishopsthorpe, spying, manœuvring, or advising, and when he failed to pouch the second commissaryship, he spread various reports of the Dean's mismanagement. Matters came to a head at a Sessions Dinner in the house of George Woodhouse, a wine-merchant. At such assemblies the county and the clergy met. Sterne, scenting a situation and always keen for a comedy, sat down amongst the guests. In the midst of many toasts, the Dean, heated with wrath and wine, addressed Sir Edmund Anderson of Kilnwick, and openly charged the legal pluralist with slander. Topham denied any reflection on the Dean's backstairs influence. But then out came Sterne with proof positive. Topham, forced to recant, defended his behaviour by an alleged promise on the part of Fountayne. This Sterne challenged the lawyer to produce, while Fountayne, probably prompted by Sterne, read aloud a correspondence which left his opponent routed and crestfallen. The points are irksome and need not be examined. Suffice it to say that the Archbishop's daughter played a part in the farce, that Topham (as Mr Slope might have done in *Barchester Towers*) called the Cathedral worthies a "set of strange people," and, notwithstanding his discomfiture, "continued to impugn the Dean's disregard of ecclesiastical forms."

These incidents laid the train of an explosion to which another fuse soon set the match. In 1751 Mrs Topham

¹ Trollope himself, it will be found, was mindful of *Tristram Shandy* in his *Barchester Towers*

presented her husband with a son, destined when he grew up to run the pace in London and to boast that in the event he had laid the foundations of Sterne's literary career. For this son Dr Topham resolved to provide, even in the cradle. He discovered that the Patent of the Prerogative Courts, his most lucrative appointment, could in strictness be granted for two lives. The Archbishop was ill, his daughter acted as secretary, and the assent was gained. But Didius's triumph was short-lived. Fountayne and his friends interposed. A shower of pamphlets ensued, the last and best of which was Sterne's

The History of a Good Warm Watch-coat, racy at the time, is now dullish reading. Far more vivid is the scene in *Tristram* where Yorick settles his score with Didius's friend by rescuing a chestnut which had scorched him. Sterne in the early fragment, where plums figured as planets, had applied the telescope. In this pamphlet the microscope comes into play. It is a parish allegory where John the Clerk means Fountayne, Trim (the opposite of his Shandean namesake) is Topham, the Parson is the Archbishop, "Mark Slender" is Braithwaite, and "Lorry Slim, an unlucky whyte," is Sterne. The dispute turns on an old watch-coat on which Trim had set his heart, and nothing would serve him but he must take it home to have it stitched into a warm petticoat for his wife and a winter *jerkin* for himself. This, of course, signified the reversion of the Patent Office, while the previous fusses respecting the two commissaryships are figured as tiffs "about an old cast-off pair of black plush breeches" and "a great Green Pulpit-Cloth and old Velvet Cushion."

The sole part still pertinent is that about Sterne himself and the "pair of black breeches" which "are very thin by this time"—But "Lorry has a light heart, and what recommends them to him is this, that, thin as they

are, he knows that Trim, let him say what he will to the contrary, still envies the possessor of them, and with all his pride would be very glad to wear them after *him*." To these "black breeches" Sterne constantly alludes hereafter: they mean himself, the critics of *Tristram* are styled "the reviewers of my breeches," and the real breeches half fill the scanty portmanteau of his journey to France. The sum of the story is that, "in these several pitched battles *Trim* has been so *trim'd* as never disastrous hero was *trim'd* before."

The matter was arranged: Sterne suppressed the pamphlet, and even came to dislike the dignitary for whom he had taken up the cudgels. His avowal in the paper which he drew up as a sort of informal testament, will be new: he is giving directions concerning his manuscripts:—

"The Political Romance I wrote, which was never published, may be added to the fag end of the Volume. . . . Tho' I have two reasons why I wish it may not be wanted—First an undeserved compliment to one whom I have since found to be of a very corrupt mind—I knew him weak and ignorant, but thought him honest. The other reason is I have hung up Dr Topham in the Romance in a ridiculous light, which upon my soul, I now doubt whether he deserves it.—So let the Romance go to sleep—not by itself" (he adds), "for 'twill have company." In time fresh cases of Cathedral selfishness were to develop themselves. The Dean, commonly regarded as Sterne's uniform befriender, changed his tone towards the man who hacked for him, and eventually stood in his bad graces. "My *conscio* [sic] *ad clinum* [i.e. *clerum*] in Latin" (so Sterne notes bitterly) "which I made for Fountayne to preach before the University to enable him to take his Doctor's Degree you will find two copys of it with my sermons—he got Honour by it—What got I? Nothing in my lifetime, then let me not (I charge you, Mrs Sterne) be robbed

of it after my death That long pathetic letter to him of the hard measure I have received—I charge you to let it be printed—'Tis equitable you should derive that good from my sufferings"¹

These dim and wearisome misunderstandings were again exploited, to Sterne's discredit, when the sleek Gilbert, faring, it was said, "like one of Epicurus' hogs," had replaced Hutton at Bishopsthorpe Nor has it yet been noted that it was the powerful Mrs Montagu, Sterne's firm ally, who exerted herself to dispel them and seems to have reconciled the Dean to the Prebendary "I wanted," Sterne assured her, "mercy, but not sacrifice, and am obliged in my turn to beg pardon of you, which I do from my soul, for putting you to the pain of excusing what in fact was more a misfortune than a fault and but the necessary consequence of a train of Impressions to my disadvantage The Chancellor of York, Dr Herring, was, I suppose, the person who interested himself in the honour of the Dean of York and requested that act of friendship to be done to the Dean by bringing about the separation 'twixt the Dean and myself—The poor gentleman has been labouring this point many years, but not out of zeal for the Dean's character, but to secure the next residentiaryship to the Dean of St Asalph [*sic*], his son, he was outwitted himself at last and has now all the foul play to settle with his conscience, without gaining or being ever likely to gain his purpose I take the liberty of enclosing a letter I wrote last month to the Dean which will give you some light into my hard measure, and show you that I was as much a protection to the Dean of York as he to me The Answer to this has made me easy

¹ These two quotations, modifying the received story about Fountayne, occur in the memoranda which Sterne drew up in 1761, when he thought himself dying Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. II pp 271-2

with regard to my views in the Church of York, and as it has cemented anew the Dean and myself beyond the power of any future breach, I thought it would give you satisfaction to see how my interests stand, and how much and how undeserved I have been abused ; when you have read it—it shall never be read more, for reasons your penetration will see at once.”

This inclosure to Mrs Montagu is evidently the appeal to Fountayne mentioned by Sterne in the previous excerpt about the bestowal of his papers. Whether that appeal still survives is unknown. Sterne got into such a tangle of politics, secular and clerical, that he constantly memorialised his supposed misusers. Murmuring was not his wont, though it was natural to his wife, and her influence is latent in at least one of her own letters to Mrs Montagu where, alluding to this very imbroglio, she sighs that she “must expect to the last hour” of her life “to be reproached by Mr Sterne as the blaster of his fortunes.”¹

So much for the sequels of the *Watch-coat*. The satire itself reposes in the limbo of old lumber · no biographer can ever enliven it.

But Sterne consoled himself for Deans and Doctors. He had other excitements apart from these bickerings, and all are immanent in *Tristram Shandy*. During the decade or so of Cathedral wrangles, his intimacy with John Hall-Stevenson had revived. The sentimentalist visited Crazy Castle, and occasionally gallivanted at Scarborough, where theatrical Cradock saw him on a later occasion racing a “chariot” along the shore with one wheel in the sea. Stevenson renewed his bad ascendancy, and from time

¹ These letters of Sterne and his wife to Mrs Montagu are among our new matter and belong apparently to the year 1759 Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II pp 175-7

to time he visited Sterne, with whose wife he was "in high favour" "She swears," Sterne told him in 1761, "you are a fellow of wit, tho' humorous, a funny jolly soul, tho' somewhat splenetic, and (bating the love of women) as honest as GOLD How do you like the simile?"

Meanwhile the hypochondriac lived his own unwholesome life in the solitude of his northern stronghold There was something "satiric and hircine" about the man which certainly pointed some of the directions of Sterne's after-authorship Yet even here we light on that fanciful element which extends to his remotest surroundings

Crazy Castle itself was a fabric of romance Fantastic battlements, topped by a shabby clock tower and backed by weird hills, fronted a stagnant moat and the tangled garden where an owl perched on a classical urn¹ And around the turret perpetually blew—the words are Sterne's—"a thin death-doing pestiferous north-east wind"²

More than has hitherto been quoted of Stevenson's own description in his *Crazy Tales* is fraught with interest It characterises both the place and its master, though, luckily, it does not characterise his *Tales* —

"There's a castle in the North
Seated upon a swampy clay,
At present but of little worth,
In former times it had its day

This ancient castle is called *Crazy*,
Whose mouldering walls a moat environs,
Which moat goes heavily and lazy,
Like a poor prisoner in irons

¹ So it figures on the frontispiece to Hall Stevenson's *Crazy Tales* When Sterne was in Paris in 1762 he showed this illustration to Trotter, one of the Demoniac Brotherhood, and "made him happy beyond expression"

² Sterne to Stevenson [August, 1761]

Many a time I have stood and thought,
 Seeing the boat upon this ditch,
 It looked as if it had been brought
 For the amusement of a witch,
 To sail amongst applauding frogs,
 With water-rats, dead cats, and dogs.
 The boat so leaking is and old
 That if you're fanciful and merry
 You may conceive without being told
 That it resembles Charon's wherry.

A turret also you may note,
 Its glory vanished like a dream,
 Transformed into a pigeon-cote,
 Nodding beside the sleepy stream,
 From whence by steps with moss o'ergrown
 You mount upon a terrace high,
 Where stands that heavy pile of stone,
 Irregular and all awry
 If many a buttress did not reach
 A kind and salutary hand,
 Did not encourage and beseech
 The terrace and the house to stand,
 Left to themselves and at a loss,
 They'd tumble down into the foss.

Over the castle hangs a tower
 Threatening destruction every hour,
 Where owls and Rats and the Jackdaw
 Their Vespers and their Sabbath keep,
 All night scream horribly and caw,
 And snore all day in horrid sleep.

Oft as the quarrels and the noise
 Of scolding maids and idle boys,

Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like legions of damned souls
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky

Where nothing grows,
So keen it blows,
Save here and there the graceless fir
From Scotland with its kindred fled
That moves its arms, and makes a stir,
And tosses its fantastic head,
That seems to make a noise and cry
Only for want of Company

In this retreat, whilom so sweet,
Once Tristram and his Cousin dwelt,
They talk of Crazy when they meet
As if their tender hearts would melt

Some fall to fiddling, some to fluting,
Some to shooting some to fishing,
Others to pishing and disputing,
Or to computing by vain-wishing
And in the evening when they met,
To think on't always does seem good,
Then never met a jollier set,
Either before or since the Flood
As long as Crazy Castle lasts
Their Tales will never be forgot,
And Crazy may fight many blasts
And better Castles go to pot "

"Cousin Anthony," the Castle's "lord," invited each wild eccentric of the countryside to orgies, which do not seem to have exceeded conversation parsons like the

Rev. Robert Lascelles, the "Panty" (or Pantagruel) of the "Demoniacs," together with Scroope, who was dubbed Cardinal; colonels like Lawson Hall, the son-in-law of Lord William Manners, and Charles Lee, the renegade "Savage" of the American War—whom Sterne can scarcely have met since he was off fighting in the forties;¹ Zachary Moore, that queer prodigal who spent his substance on the continent and died rich in poverty; stoics like old Hewitt, whom Smollett knew, who recrossed Sterne's path at Toulouse, married and sober, and who closed his life at Florence, deeming self-starvation a fine quietus; Squire Nathaniel Garland, the "G" to whom Sterne addressed several of his letters; Gilbert, another "G," and probably another squire; Irvine ("Paddy Andrew"), doctor of divinity and dominie of Kirk Leatham grammar school; with Pringle (the "Don Pringello" of *Tristram*), an unascertained architect who eventually came to restore the building. To these a leaven of worse fellowship was added afterwards, the remnant of the Medmenham blasphemers: Sir Francis Dashwood (who gave them their name of "Franciscans"), a godless roysterer and perhaps the worst Chancellor of the Exchequer that England has ever suffered, and John Wilkes, the ribald libertine who lived to assist Sterne's daughter, and to make love to Sterne's Eliza. The "Demoniacs" were a lawless brood, nothing was bad or good enough for their tongues, and they were ill company for the Yorkshire vicar.²

The Castle was a palace of do-as-you-please and talk-as-

¹ Sterne, however, lived to befriend and correspond with an Arthur Lee, a namesake who was possibly his younger brother, Arthur Lee of Virginia.

- The *Crazy Tales*, which their author dedicated to "himself," and the *Fables for Grown Gentlemen* are naked but not ashamed, though it should be remembered that the paradox of that generation was unexampled, and that such literary excesses were not so seriously taken as they would be nowadays.

For the "Demoniacs" cf. *Several Letters to Sterne*, by W. Durrant Cooper (1814), Fitzgerald's *Life* (p. 47 *et seq.*), and, more especially, Professor Cross's *Life* (p. 122 *et seq.*)

you-should-not. Here they forgathered and rioted over their round-table. Here Tristram profaned his office by giving them his mock benediction as the "household of faith," and here they let loose their nonsensical jokes and unconscionable tales. Not more veering or untethered was its weather-vane than the revelry of their humours. Hall-Stevenson, whose topsy-turvydom is sketched in *Yorick's Eugenius*, lived to be sixty-seven, but he never sobered down, though he made a religion of health. To the last his odd aspect and scratch-wig were a byword in London. Stevenson preached discretion to Sterne, as may be read at the start of *Shandy*, and Sterne preached discretion to Stevenson—in his potations. "If I was you, quoth *Yorick*, I would drink more water, *Eugenius*—And if I was you, *Yorick*, replied *Eugenius*, so would I."

As a man, Stevenson seems to have been a blunderbuss. In La Bruyère's *Caractères*, a book which Sterne had certainly read, and whence he seems to have drawn hints for his philosophy of posture,¹ occurs a type—that of Théodecte—which strongly recalls Sterne's intimate

"I hear him," says the satirist, "in the very vestibule, his voice strengthens with his approach till here he stands in my room. He laughs, he cries, he deafens one's closed ears, he is a thunderstorm. His tone of speech is no less singular than his mien. He keeps no truce with himself, and he only returns from the din of his horseplay to mouth out vanities and follies. He has so little regard for persons or amenities that, in all innocence, he gets on everybody's nerves, and disoblige the whole assembly, unconscious of the fact. Directly dinner is served he takes the first seat at

¹ "Il n'y a rien de si délié, de si simple et de si imperceptible, ou il n'entre des manières qui nous décèlent. Un sot ni n'entre, ni ne sort, ni ne s'assied, ni se lève, ni se tait, ni n'est sur ses jambes, comme un homme d'esprit."

table. . . . He eats, drinks, tells his stories, and makes his fun. He interrupts without discrimination. . . . If they gamble, he wins, rallies the loser and offends him. The laughs are mere game for his fussiness. . . .”

But about Stevenson was an openness that formed a rough foil to Sterne's dubious delicacy which hid in corners. Sterne's theory—one afterwards transmitted to De Maistre—was the distinction between soul and beast both contending for the body. But soul for him was feeling, while the beast preponderated in Stevenson's brain. Neither Stevenson nor Sterne was a real man of the world: the flesh Stevenson had part, and in some sort of devil with seemed to have shared. But Sterne's devil was not anemic, it was a mischievous devil, the sprite of fancy that led on his desk and guided his pen.

Over and over again he assures us that he was so moved. As we listen in face of his two-knobbed chair (which, he says, typified wit and judgment) we behold behind it not the foul spirit seeking whom he may devour, but one of those grinning gargoyles which gibe at time from some gothic buttress. None the less, the worst sallies of *Tristram* were designed for the ears of the besotted, though some, too, of its best creations seem studies of the frayed odds and ends, the tags and bobtails of humanity that formed the “Demoniacs.” We cannot figure Uncle Toby at their table: apocrypha has it that he was a Captain Hinde of Worcestershire, though surely he belongs to Sterne's childish days. And yet one more side of Sterne was alien to these banquets—the sentimentalism which such sons of Belial must have jostled unmercifully. Thicker blood coursed in the veins of the whole set than circulated in those of the anæmic Sterne. But the quaint learning was there that pervades the scholar's workmanship. They were not unintellectual. These men, for all their

twists, were no mere gormandisers and swillers, most of them had read and ranged afar. In intellect Sterne delighted, and, though it is hard to imagine his joy in such coarse carousals, these unpleasing frolics at least made him feel on firmer ground.

Open those gothic windows, Tristram, and let that noisome air escape! Art thou so "positive" thou hast a "soul"? Lurks there not somewhere in thee a spark ethereal? Or is not the unhallowed scene rather the flicker of a masquerade, a goblin dance in some uncanny carnival?

CHAPTER X

OF STERNE'S WIFE, APART FROM STERNE

WHAT manner of woman was the "contemplative girl" whom Sterne had married? She has been foreshadowed already, but fresh clues may serve to resume her story. In the portrait of her middle age we see some confirmation of Mrs Montagu's estimate. We can imagine that "fleshy arm," can hear her shrill, uncomplaining girdings, can realise her envy, and her grievance at the isolation which her temperament entailed.

To Mrs Montagu, she bewails the "cruel" separation from all her friends, while she declares that the least mark of their kindness or remembrance gives her "unspeakable Delight."¹ And she was jealous. She cannot hide her pique at her cousin's preference for Lydia's children even when the sister whom she dearly loved lay bedridden in her last illness.—

"Your supposition of my sister's having boasted to me of her children," she snarls, "is doubtless extremely natural. I wish it had been as Just, but I can, in 3 words, inform you of all I know about 'em, to wit their number and their names. . . . Had my Lydia been so obliging as to have made them the subject of her Letters, I shou'd by this time have had a tolerable idea of them, by considering what she

¹ Mrs Montagu's letter, if she had received it in a "more happy hour," would have made her "almost Frantic with Joy"

said with some abatement but as it is I no more know whether they are Black, Brown or Fair, Wise or Otherwise, Gentle, or Froward, than the Man in the Moon Pray is this strange Silence on so Interesting a Subject owing to her profound Wisdom or her abundant Politeness? But be it to which it will, as soon as she recovers her health, I shall insist on all the satisfaction she can give on this head In the meantime I rejoice to find they have your approbation and am truly thankful that L. has done her part, which is natural as most motherly, though I frankly own I shall not be the first to forgive any slights that Dame Fortune may be disposed to shy on them Your God-daughter, as in duty bound, sends her best respects to you I hope that she may enjoy what her poor Mother in vain laments, the want of an intimate acquaintance with her Kindred "

Still later, and when Mrs Montagu helped her husband, she shows the same scolding spirit She admits that she has always lamented the lack of any "little mark of kindness or regard to me as a kinswoman" "Surely," she sighs, "never poor girl who had done no one thing to merit such neglect, was ever so cast off by her relations as I have been" "I writ three posts ago to inform Mrs Montagu of the sorrow her indifferation [*sic*] had brought upon me, and beg'd she wou'd do all that was in her power to undo the mischief, though I cannot for my soul see which way" And then follows a sentence already quoted, where she expects to "the last hour" of her life to be "reproached" by Sterne as "the blaster of his fortunes"¹

Poor soul! she deserves our pity, always fretting over fictions as keenly as over the real sorrows that hurt her less There is no evidence that Sterne ever reproached her as the "blaster of his fortunes" on the contrary, despite his

¹ Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 176, and, for the previous passage, *ibid.*, p 27 These passages give an entirely new clue to Mrs Sterne's temper

neglects, he provided minutely for her material comfort, nor can we find that her kinswoman had any cause for siding, as she did, with Sterne, except that his wife was disagreeable. Her disposition was her worst misfortune and ill fitted her to cope with the sentimentality and sensationalism of her husband's errors. Moreover, like her sister, she was melancholy by constitution, and she shared the asthma, for which Mrs Montagu used to prescribe "Valerian tea." But neither can we excuse one who, instead of sparing his wife, provoked her into morose indifference. And this is the less excusable, because none better knew than the student of feeling the true way to a woman's heart.

"Women" (he wrote in a letter headed "Wednesday, past 9 at night—and not very well") "look at least for attentions ;—they consider them as an inherent birthright, given to their sex by the laws of polished Society ; and when they are deprived of them they most certainly have a right to complain and will be, one and all, disposed to practise that revenge, which is not, by any means, to be treated with contempt. . . . Love one, if you please, and as much as you please—but be gracious to all."¹ Sterne was far too gracious to the majority.

At the present period, wife and husband, as John Croft remarks, did not "gee well together," though elsewhere he adds that they would write daily love-letters to each other—which must have been good practice for Yorick. His wife would often murmur that no one house could hold them, and this recalls the eighteenth-century wit who replied to a like remark about himself that there were two sides to houses as to questions—so *he* took the inside, and, as was fitting, his *wife*, the outside.

Laurey was "gey ill" to live with ; but Mrs Sterne's

¹ Cf *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne, Never Before Published*, London, the Logographic Press (1788), p 200

repinings against neglect were due as much to the wish for grand society, her sister's foible, as to her own unhappiness. Yet, in Sterne's letters to his friend Blake, we find his wife visiting the Cowpers and enjoying the York amusements. Her native despondency, deepened by her sister's death, gradually affected her mind, and it is this melancholia that lends her pathos. As for her "arm," that it was active is shown by John Croft, who assures us of one flagrant and merited instance, when she "pulled" her inconstant husband on to the floor.

Such seems to have been the masterful Elizabeth—a different figure from the phantom of biographers. She has even been identified with the acquiescent, unintelligent Mrs Shandy, as she figures in the dialogue concerning young Tristram's breeches. Nothing can be further from the truth. Mrs Sterne had a will of her own, of which none was more aware than her henpecked husband.

By the summer of 1759, after a stroke of the palsy, she became subject to hallucinations, and Sterne took a house in the Minster Yard that she might be under the care of a York doctor, while their daughter enjoyed the advantages of an education for which her father was ever sedulous. Little Lydia was much distressed at her mother's condition, but Sterne sought to shake off his own dejection by the play of his spirits. These set him a-writing, and, so far, Mrs Sterne's illness contributed to *Tristram Shandy*, with which, as early as the start of 1759, Sterne busied himself in good earnest.¹

While her wits wandered, she fancied (a symptom of megalomania) that she was the Queen of Bohemia, a domain of which he was certainly the king. "He treated her as such," John Croft tells us among his anecdotes, "with all the supposed respect due to a crowned head, and continued

¹ Cf his letter to Mrs F—— [? Fothergill] headed "York, Tuesday, November 19th, 1759"

to practise this farcical mockery during her confinement. . . . It was in great measure owing to her insane state, which afforded him more time for study, and to relieve melancholy, that he first attempted to set about the work of *Tristram Shandy*." Nor should it be forgotten that into that work "Bohemia" enters. The king asserted his prerogative to the full. "In order to induce her to take the air," resumes Croft in another instalment, "he proposed coursing in the way practised in Bohemia. For that he procured bladders and filled them with beans and tied them to the wheels of a single horse-chair, when he drove Madam into a stubble field." This resource, be it remarked in passing, was not necessarily heartless, for it is only charitable to presume that the jest was intended to persuade her into exercise. "With the motion of the carriage all the bladders rattled, which alarmed the hares, and the greyhounds were ready to take them."¹ How the parishioners must have wondered!

Sterne behaved ill enough to his wife without aggravation by insult, and here he must be absolved. After his peccadilloes and her recovery, he still addressed her as "dearest," and some years later he thus delivered himself to Mrs Montagu: "I return you thanks for the interest which you took in her and there is not an honest man who will not do me the justice to say I have ever given her the character of as moral and virtuous a woman as ever God made.—what occasioned discontent ever betwixt us is now no more—we have settled accounts to each other's satisfaction and honour, and I am persuaded shall end our days without one word of reproach or even Incivility."²

¹ Cf Croft's *Scrapeana*, cited by Professor Cross in his *Life*, p 185. For the previous matters (outside Mrs Climençon's *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1896) cf the *Whitefoord Papers*, pp 226–34, and the Blake correspondence given in Mr Fitzgerald's biography.

² Cf Mrs Climençon's *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 176. The letter is undated, but internal evidence points to the date given.

This was about 1761, yet it was not long ere he wrote to Hall-Stevenson in the dog-Latin which was their common language, that "what ailed him he knew not but he was more sick and tired of his wife than ever," and that an imp of darkness was driving him to London

One tie of affection, however, always united them—the little Lydia, whom her father never ceased to adore. Even thus early the child suffered from that asthma which was hereditary on both sides. But directly her mother's health mended, Sterne's true daughter is found playing practical jests on her York school-fellows, and composing love-letters from feigned admirers to hoax them. Neither in her nor in him could the mercurial element be quenched, and when he was sick even unto death, he assured a friend that he would probably "skip off next moment to some monkeyish trick or another." For his little Lydia he cared and toiled to the close, and when she parted from him for the last time he sobbed that the severance was one between his soul and his body. The year after his death, the daughter gave a pleasant picture of herself and her mother in a letter to John Wilkes. They were at Angoulême, she sat reading Milton and Shakespeare aloud, and passing the rest of her time in drawing and music.¹ Here again she resembles her father.

The Sternes had agreed to spare and scrape every farthing for this child of their hearts. They bought "a Strong Box with a nick in the top" as a receptacle for these savings. But one day, at the outset of Mrs Sterne's illness, "she espied Lorry breaking open the Strong Box." The mother fainted, and a quarrel ensued. So runs a tale which John Croft traces to Mrs Sterne herself, among many which, according to him, proved "poor Lorry" unstable.² But

¹ Cf Add. MSS 30877, ff 72-8

² Cf *Whitefoord Papers*, pp 234-5

is it quite impossible that this invasion of the hoard was for the purpose of assisting his old mother? The dates, in any case, would seem to tally.

Little Lydia, then, should have riveted her parents, had the one been able to curb her temper, or the other, his temperament. Sometimes for happy seasons they would be at one. But in the main they were apathetic, except when illness revived attachment. Husband and wife had grown callous. He told Hall-Stevenson that she was "easy": she no longer resented his sentimental excursions.

When the Channel divided them, he was eager to comfort her, while she at least closed her ears to the unkind suggestions of candid friends. True, at an earlier stage he is said to have caricatured her features: the sketch was signed "Pigrich," but its authenticity is unproved. That Sterne could speak slightly of the wife for whom he often stinted himself appears by more tokens than one. His Latin ebullition has been noted,¹ and in other letters he sometimes regrets though he never disparages her. In his "Journal to Eliza" he styles her hard and grasping. Such perhaps, through her extravagance, she became. But Sterne himself had helped to harden a woman whom the thorns of his sensibility had hurt without the solace of its roses. On the other hand, his quick alternation of moods must never be left out of sight. What he would curse one day he would bless the next, and he could be tender and cruel by turns. As he felt, he shifted, but the strength of his sensations lent them a show of permanence.

Mrs Sterne's illness of 1749 produced an influence,

¹ "Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus & negrotus de meâ plus quam unquam" This letter, which probably belongs to 1761, though in Dr J P Brown's edition of Sterne's Works (vol iv p 596) it is misdated "1767," will be quoted again

not temporary as has been supposed, but colouring page on page of *Tristram*. Deprived of his wife's companionship, always in quest of the feminine, the mariner of moods embarked on the first sentimental voyage of which we have record. It is the episode of his "dear, dear Kitty," of Catherine de Fourmentelle—the "dear, dear Jenny" of his romance.

"Oh Plato, Plato," sings Byron, mocking flirtation under the domino of friendship. The platonic attitude was natural to Sterne, half-poet, half-poseur. As he gazes into the eyes of that interesting "friend," he looks like some Watteauesque abbé, constantly (or inconstantly) coupling the love of making an appeal with the luxury of making love. And this Yorkshire abbé was now forty-six. For eighteen years he had been married. He was frankly sick of his surroundings and his life. The death-rattle had sounded in his ears, and he panted for some romance. His waning health and galling marriage alike oppressed him.

"All tragedies are finished by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage."

With the last line of this distich Sterne would not have agreed. He was never a cynic.

CHAPTER XI

OF STERNE, APART FROM HIS WIFE (KITTY DE FOURMENTELLE
—AND “TRISTRAM” : MARCH 1759—JUNE 1760)

If we had strolled into a York draper's shop on the second of March 1759, we should have observed a young lady cheapening a silk of five-and-twenty shillings a yard, telling the mercer she was sorry to have given him so much trouble, and then immediately buying a wider material at tenpence. Near her stood a middle-aged clergyman, looking a trifle grave, and archly moralising that “when we cannot get at the very thing we wish” we should “never take up with the next best in degree to it.” “No,” he sighs, “that is pitiful beyond description.” Was it? He was the best judge.

The clergyman, of course, was Sterne, who has informed us of the affair ; the lady was Catherine de Fourmentelle.

Who was she ?

Her name stands variously as Fourmentelle, Fromantel, and Fourmantel.¹ All that can be vaguely gathered is that she sprang from a Huguenot family—“Beranger” de Fourmentelle—which had once held estates in Domingo ; that her elder sister became Catholic, returned to Paris, and was reinstalled in the family estates. Thus much is to be

¹ The first, in the *Public Advertiser*, September 1760, the second, in Joseph Baidon's *Songs*, the third, in the collection of letters printed by the Philobiblon Society (1513-16)

gleaned from the loose hints of Kitty's "friend" Mrs Agnes Weston, the source of those self-revealing letters which, over fifty years ago, the late Mr Murray gave to the world. That Mrs Weston cannot be taken seriously is proved by the supplement of her story. It alleges that Sterne had known the young lady before his marriage (which had now lasted eighteen years), and that, distracted by his "desertion," she was taken by her sister to Paris, where she died in a mad-house, though not before Sterne had visited her, and interwoven her sad fate with the second idyll of his Maria in the *Sentimental Journey*. Such assertions are as baseless as that other myth which consigned Sterne's daughter to the terrors of the French Revolution. What has never yet been noticed is that up to 1767, the year preceding Sterne's death, the name of his "dear, dear Jenny" is to be found variously recurring in the pages of *Tristram Shandy*, and that therefore she only ceases when Eliza Draper crossed his path at the close.

We find her in a passage of 1762, where, hoping that their "Worships and Reverences are not offended," he says that he will give them something next year to be offended at, and adds "That is my dear, dear Jenny's way—but who my JENNY is and which is the right and which the wrong end of a woman is the thing to be concealed—it shall be told you the next chapter but one, to my chapter of Buttonholes—and not one chapter before." That chapter was never written.

We find her, however, in the same year bickering with Sterne, after commenting on his eccentricities. "This is the true reason," he notes, "that my dear JENNY and I, as well as all the world besides us, have such eternal squabbles about nothing—She looks at her outside, I at her in—how is it possible we should agree about her value?"

We catch sight of her in 1765 emulating the Pythagoreans

by getting "out of her body" to "think well," while in the same year she figures in Sterne's fanciful disquisition on cold water as being still in love. We hear her remonstrance in a strange passage shortly afterwards, where Sterne typifies all love's vagaries, by turns exclaiming: "Curse her!", and "Brightest of Stars, thou wilt shed thy influence upon someone," till he rejects all the stealthy spices dished up "by the great arch cook of cooks, who does nothing from morning to night but sit down by the fireside and invent inflammatory dishes for us." At this point: "'Oh,—Tristram! Tristram!'"—cried Jenny, 'Oh Jenny, Jenny,' replied I, and so went on with the twelfth chapter."

In the year before he died, we still find her pervading one of the tenderest passages that Sterne ever wrote, that beautiful piece about the flight of time, already emphasised—a piece for which Sterne might almost be pardoned a dozen Jennies. And in this last passage Jenny wears rubies about her neck. Perhaps too we find her once more in the shamefaced or shameless Latin effusion (as you like it) forwarded to Crazy Castle—probably in the autumn of 1761—where he owns that the demon of "love," not "fame," was driving him townward, and that he was quite infatuated: "Sum mortaliter in amore." Clearly, therefore, Jenny is no fleeting presence, for Sterne was not accustomed to feign the names on which he dwelt as an author. His "dear, dear Jenny" is visible as by turns careful, fond, petulant, critical, disputationous, but needy never. Unfriended we cannot suppose her, for, at the outset of their correspondence, her mother is with her; pathos never enters into her situation.

York journals record her performances during the winter when Sterne first made her acquaintance, dubbing himself, in a letter that he then got her to write, as "a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world where I came a stranger." And

there are London newspapers to prove that in 1761 at any rate she was engaged at Ranelagh. Moreover, as we proceed, it will appear that Sterne himself wrote a song for this Ranelagh nightingale. That he represented their footing merely as one of dear, dear friendship is shown by that early part of his *Tristram*, where, as a man, he owns "the tender appellation of my dear, dear Jenny," but, as an author, disclaims the inference. "All I plead for, in this case, madam" (he writes), "is strict justice, and that you do so much of it to me as well as to yourself,—as not to pre-judge or receive such an impression of me, till you have better evidence than I am positive, at present, can be produced.

—It is not impossible but that my dear, dear Jenny! tender as the appellation is, may be my child—nor is there anything above the stars—nor is there anything unnatural or extravagant in the supposition that my dear Jenny may be my friend—Friend!—my friend—Surely, Madam, A friendship between the two sexes may subsist and be supported without—Fie! MR SHANDY. Without anything, madam, but that tender and delicious sentiment, which ever mixes in friendship where there is a difference of sex. Let me entreat you to study the pure and sentimental parts of the best French romances,—it will really, Madam, astonish you to see with what variety of chaste expression this delicious sentiment, which I have the honour to speak of is dressed out."

Meanwhile Jenny has been left in the mercer's shop, and there we must leave her standing while we pursue two more clues to her identity. John Croft's tattle has already told us that the testy Jaques Sterne quarrelled with Laurence about a lady. This lady may well have been Catherine de Fourmentelle, if a conjecture, not wholly fanciful, from Sterne's nomenclature be permitted. Why did he call *Tristram Shandy* *Tristram*? Sterne was versed

in the cycle of ancient legend, and he can hardly have been ignorant of "Tristram and Yseult," the plot of which hinges on the nephew, whose lady-love was usurped by an uncle. Then, again, Catherine's surname is given as Beranger de Fourmentelle. She is known to have written a letter of recommendation for Sterne's coming novel to some person of influence in London. Of Garrick he already knew, but it is not certain that he knew Garrick personally.¹ The close friend of Garrick and of all his circle, the man who procured Hogarth's illustrations for *Tristram*, was Richard Berenger, afterwards Master of the Horse to the young Queen Charlotte, praised for his chivalrous courtesy both by Dr Johnson and Hannah More, and the nephew of Pope's and Bolingbroke's Lord Cobham. His father seems to have descended from a French family, and Kitty herself could boast a French motto, "Je ne change pas qu'en mourant" : a convenient sentiment for Sterne to work on. Is it unlikely that this Richard Berenger was a distant kinsman of the Beranger de Fourmentelles? Such a surmise at least explains how Sterne came to exploit the services of an obscure ballad-singer for the advancement of his coming book.

Sterne's moods were as digressive as his authorship. The poor distraught wife had apparently not long to live. So far as he could be, he was afflicted. He probably wept for her now, as it is certain that he wept for her afterwards ; but real grief was not in his composition, and the prick of his sorrow would only urge him to court distraction. He resented the contrariness of a woman whom, later, he described as though not "sour as lemon," yet not "sweet as sugar" The plain high road of endurance was beyond the vagrant. So he turned to one who looked up to him as a

¹ Cf the interesting and unknown letter from Sterne to Garrick, of 27th January 1760, printed in the *Archivist* for September 1894.

protector, who shared his taste for music, and from whose responsiveness he might extract fresh food for his fantasy
The dreamer was forty-five

"My dear Kitty," he wrote in one of his first love-letters to the heroine, "I have sent you a Pot of Sweetmeats and a Pot of Honey, neither of them half so sweet as yourself, but don't be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you, for if you do, I shall send you a Pot of Pickles (by way of Contrarys) to sweeten up and bring you to yourself again. Whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours, and according to your Motto, such a one, my dear Kitty, '*qui ne changera pas, que en Mourant*'"

He did not stop at music or sweetmeats. Her caprice urged his curiosity. He was going to paint her picture "in black which best becomes you," but he would be "out of humour" unless she accepted "a few Bottles of Calcavillo," which he has ordered his "Man" to leave at the "Dore." The Calcavillo perhaps came from the Crofts, who still continued their foreign wine trade. And the day was worthy of the deed, for it was Sunday. "The Reason of this trifling Present, you shall know on Tuesday night, and I half insist upon it that you invent some plausible excuse to be home by 7." He signs himself "Yrs, Yorick."

And Kitty had clearly been treated to some tit-bits from *Tristram Shandy*. The oftener the coquette listened, the more Sterne flirted. Nor was it only profane literature that he sent her. His pet sermon of "Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath" is heartily at her service. He proffers it "because there is a beautiful character in it, of a tender and compassionate man in the picture given of Elijah."

Kitty, we may suppose, sympathised with her middle-aged swain as the misunderstood husband with a stricken wife, while he, on his part, had enlisted the favour of York

friends for her profession. The sermon was a flattery. "Read it, my dear Kitty," he goes on, "and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle distinction in your heart which I have painted in the Prophet's, which has attached me so much to you and your Interests that I shall live and dye your affectionate and faithful, Lawrence Sterne."—A significant postscript follows. He is off to watch the effect of his afternoon attentions, after a visit to his staid friends, the Fothergills. He frisks about like a kitten with his pretty ball of sensation, nor does he conceal his pleasure. "Adieu, dear Friend, I had the pleasure to drink your health last night." He has toasted that mixed friendship which was ever his vaunt with women. Sterne raising his glass to the female Elijah! It is a picture, perhaps a caricature.

In the evenings—Saturday evenings—after her concerts he sits long and late with her, discoursing, we may be certain, about himself, and making his York sermons the pretext for further visits. He assumes Swift's attitude; he chides and corrects her into devotion. "My dear Kitty," the rogue writes again, "if this Billet catches you in Bed, you are a lazy, sleepy little slut, and I am a giddy, foolish, unthinking fellow for keeping you so late up; but this Sabbath is a day of sorrow, for I shall not see my dear creature unless you meet me at Taylor's half an hour after 12—but in this, do as you like. I have ordered Matthew to turn thief and steal you a quart of Honey. What is Honey to the Sweetness of thee, who are sweeter than all the flowers it comes from?"

Her sweet tooth has been twice gratified, each time with sweeter compliments, and Sterne now surrenders himself to his novel rapture: "I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you to Eternity. So Adieu! And believe what time only will prove me, that I am—Yrs."



LAURENCE STERNE

From an early engraving

elderly bene-
but time is short,
while the mother plays
line, holding the manuscript
a young girl's shoulder, she pens
dictation—the letter addressed, as may
ed, to the incomparable Dick Berenger —

“YORK, Jan 1 [1760]

—I dare say you will wonder to receive an Epistle from me and the subject of it will surprise you still more, because it is to tell you something about books. There are two volumes, just published here, which have made a great noise and have had a prodigious run, for in two days after they came out, the bookseller [Hinxman, Hildyard's successor] sold two hundred and continues selling them very fast. It is the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, which the Author told me last night at our Concert he had sent to London, so perhaps you have seen it, if you have not seen it, pray get it and read it because it has a great character as a witching smart book, and if you think so your good word in Town will do the Author, I am sure, great service. You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger—and I cannot think how I can make a better return, than to endeavour to make you a Friend to him and his performance, this is all my excuse

A strange Sunday preacher for St Michael's pulpit ! A queer meanderer through the realms of Scripture ! His sermon on "The Prodigal Son" was mainly a stalking-horse for the benefits of foreign travel And now he tours at home with a vengeance Sterne loves her to "distraction," but the episode is all friendship—pure, simple, platonic friendship What parable can do him justice ?

Kitty is urged to do something for her elderly benefactor Time will never change him, but time is short, and the actor's moment is long While the mother plays propriety beside her, and Sterne, holding the manuscript of *Tristram*, leans over the young girl's shoulder, she pens the following at his dictation—the letter addressed, as may be conjectured, to the incomparable Dick Berenger —

"YORK, Jan 1 [1760]

"SIR,—I dare say you will wonder to receive an Epistle from me and the subject of it will surprise you still more, because it is to tell you something about books There are two volumes, just published here, which have made a great noise and have had a prodigious run, for in two days after they came out, the bookseller [Hinxman, Hildyard's successor] sold two hundred and continues selling them very fast It is the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, which the Author told me last night at our Concert he had sent to London, so perhaps you have seen it, if you have not seen it, pray get it and read it because it has a great character as a witching smart book, and if you think so your good word in Town will do the Author, I am sure, great service You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger—and I cannot think how I can make a better return, than to endeavour to make you a Friend to him and his performance, this is all my excuse

for this liberty which I hope you will excuse. His name is Sterne, a gentleman of great Preferment, and a Prebendary of the Church of York, and is a great character in these parts, as a man of Learning and Wit; the graver people, however, say 'tis not fit for young ladies to read his book so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young Lady to recommend it; however the Nobility and Great Folk stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good book, tho' a little tawdry in some places.—I am, Dear Sir, Yr. most obedt. and humble Servant." This paved the way. Nearly four weeks later Sterne wrote to Garrick, with whom he could scarcely have been familiar, for he addresses him as "Sir." He had sent him advance copies, and had heard of his good opinion. The work had come "hot from his brain, without one correction." It was "an original" and a picture of the author himself: Garrick's good word would be its best recommendation. Indeed he had often thought of making it and its sequels into a "Cervantic comedy," but perhaps such a play would only be appreciated by the Universities. And so, "with his most sincere esteem, he was his most obliged and humble servant."¹ Sterne showed himself an adept at *réclame*.

That January ushered in the birth-year of Sterne's renown. The whole of the last year he had been working at the planned farrago of his book. He had shifted the sequence of its parts to suit the differing verdicts of his hearers, and on one occasion, so vexed had he been by the slumbering audience at Croft's fireside that he pitched it into the grate, from which his friend rescued it. To Stephen Croft's tongs *Tristram Shandy* owes its existence. But even then Sterne found it hard to bestow the produce of his brain. The title-page was to lack the author's name, and booksellers would

¹ For this new matter, cf the letter of 27th January 1760, printed in the *Archivist* for September 1894.

not hazard the venture without a subsidy Sterne's expenses now exceeded his income, and money was just the requisite that he lacked Luckily a bachelor friend, one Mr Lee, stepped into the breach and offered a hundred pounds, which Sterne gratefully accepted Can this Mr Lee have been some connection of the American Lee with whom Sterne afterwards corresponded ? Lee, at all events, was a friendly critic

The "Nobility" and "Great Folks" must have comprised admirers like Lords Fauconberg and Aboyne, Gilbert too, the archbishop, was a great admirer, though from the first the romance displeased many for more than one reason Its whimsicality was not comprehended by the dull, who only found it pert Its unabashed *double entendre*, its learning distilled into allegory, both mystified and offended, while its ridicule of Doctor Burton as Doctor Slop set all York by the ears Moreover, the form of its presentation in two tiny volumes, with their dashes, asterisks, and personal flourishes, looked more like some feminine indiscretion than a sober effort Those who could not understand, resented it, those who could, objected to its want of dignity, its sidelong glances, its over-freedom and over-easiness Sterne had not yet perfected the humanities of Trim and Uncle Toby, while the contentious Shandy with his wire-spun systems failed to impress the reader as real The fragment was a new and, many thought, an impudent departure a bid for "fame," so Sterne put it, more than "for food"

The words in Kitty's letter, "a little tawdry in some places," can hardly have been of Sterne's manufacture The singer must have had a judgment of her own

The first two volumes of *Tristram* had already circulated in York, whence they had been despatched for sale in London to Robert Dodsley, the famous Pall Mall bookseller No York edition has survived, and it has therefore been guessed that the book was first printed in the capital before a parcel

of its sheets was forwarded to be bound in the Yorkshire centre. This assumption, however, is not conclusive. It was customary for provincial booksellers to make arrangements for the publication of their wares in London until success might be assured. *Tristram Shandy* was on approval, and it was probably first printed in York, and then despatched to London, where it was finally disposed of.¹ Sterne was nice about typography, and it has been guessed that he wanted a fastidious woman-printer at York to produce it. This project fell through, and Hinxman came into requisition.

Anxiously Sterne awaited the news of his bantling's progress in the metropolis. The novel's hero had not yet been born in these two first instalments, and it was as an unborn experiment that Sterne watched the chances of his book. Would it prove still-born after all? Twice had it been offered to the great London publisher, who had tendered forty pounds for the copyright of a set, provided Sterne would take half the risk of the remainder. This he was unable to do, because he had privately parted with several copies. Dodsley declared the new novel to be unsaleable.²

To the libretto, so to speak, of this operetta, Kitty de Fourmentelle supplies an obligato accompaniment.

In the first week of March 1760, Sterne strolled through the York streets, perhaps to call on Kitty, when he met Stephen Croft, the elder of the two Stillington brothers, in full trim for a journey. That hearty squire bluntly proposed to haul the desponding parson off with him to London. Sterne demurred at first, on the score of his wife's precarious condition; but she was under a doctor's charge,

¹ John Croft specially says that "about 200 Copsys" were printed in York. It will be observed that the number tallies with the letter which Sterne dictated to his dear Kitty, and this is confirmed by Hall-Stevenson himself in his preface to the *Sentimental Journey Continued* (1774). Professor Cross, however, holds that the book was first printed in London.

² Cf. *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 227.

the trip might bring him fortune, and the lights of London summoned him cheerily. Croft offered to pay his expenses, and such generosity was too tempting to refuse. Sterne had barely an hour to settle his affairs and pack up his "best breeches" before they drove off together.

Arrived in town, both lodged at the house of another friend, "Mr Cholmley" of Chapel Street. Next morning, before breakfast, Sterne vanished. He had lost no time in visiting Dodsley, and the shopman told him the astounding news that not a copy of *Tristram Shandy* could be procured. The publisher had pronounced it unsaleable, the public now found it unbuyable. Then Dodsley himself appeared, and a satisfactory interview took place. Croft and Cholmley, passing in their coach up Pall Mall, espied the breakfastless author, who darted out with the news that he was "mortgaging his brains" to the bookseller for the existing volumes of *Tristram* at the rate of six hundred pounds, and that he had further engaged to furnish a fresh volume every successive year of his life. As a matter of fact, however, the sum afterwards reduced itself to about four hundred and eighty pounds, though it is uncertain for what amount Sterne may have drawn on Dodsley during the interval. He must have noted how Sterne was impressed, for he offered fifty pounds more if he would also publish two volumes of "Yorick's Sermons." The sum, however, did not content one on the threshold of plenty, and at this very moment the sanguine novice was haggling over his bargain. His friends counselled him to strike while the iron was hot. He took their advice, and returned to Chapel Street, "skipping into the room," and boasting that "he was the richest man in Europe."¹

Almost immediately after this good fortune, Sterne exchanged Chapel Street for more fashionable rooms in the

¹ *Whitefoord Papers*, pp 227-8

now extinct St Albans Street, just off Pall Mall and within hail of the bookseller. He could now superintend the début of his adventure.

Never was success more sudden. Sterne had, in fact, made a pilgrimage to his own shrine. He had not to find fame ; it stood there ready-made. Like a sort of inferior Faust, he had abandoned books and vexations to find his youth dangerously renewed, and the transformation had been achieved through one wave of the wand by the Mephistopheles of feeling. All London rang with the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, which divided it into two hostile camps. Mystery added to the piquancy of the situation. The anonymous title-page only made everyone the more eager to cast eyes on the author, and when he was once known to be a parson the sensation quickened. Garrick (and Garrick's voice meant society's) trumpeted his recommendation. He gave him the "liberty of his theatre," as Beard of Covent Garden (and hereby hangs a tale) had already given him his. At first Garrick had only offered a free pass to the Drury Lane pit. But Sterne's answer soon put the wary David to shame. "I told him," he says, "that he *acted* great things and *did* little ones ; so he stammered, looked foolish, and performed at length with a bad grace what the rival manager was so kind as to do with the best grace in the world. But no more of that—he is so able on the stage that I ought not to mention his patch-work off it."¹ Sterne's friendship, however, with Roscius was never ruffled. Mrs Garrick, the charming "Violet" of Vienna, favoured him highly, and throughout his life he repaid her by gallant homage.

He attended the courts both of the king and his mother. Mrs Montagu acted as fairy godmother, and the

¹ Cf *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne* (1788), p 60

gates of great houses swung open before him. When he entered, the man eclipsed even the book. It was found that the country clergyman was a town wit, though he sparkled more in small assemblies than in big, where he often appeared even awkward. His quips and cranks, his *bons mots* and repartees, went the round. His presence was booked three weeks in advance, and Croft said that it was like "a Parliamentary interest" to secure it. Never was guest more in demand or evidence, fashion and he ran a race together. Sterne had become a spectacle, and curiosity pressed to behold it. Lord Chesterfield, the Crichton of criticism, the sultan of deportment, showed him signal attentions. The Yorkshire magnate, Lord Rockingham, the most blameless and least significant of statesmen, took him in his train, eventually, as far as Windsor, where, in the following May, he witnessed a grand installation of the Garter in company with Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, Lord Temple, and the future Lord Chatham, already the patron of Mrs Montagu's hero. The great commoner was to accept a dedication of *Tristram* continued, and throughout life he disported himself with the fancy of one who at this very moment put up in the Cornhill window of a York poetaster, "Epigrams, anagrams, paragrams, chronograms, sold here"¹. The Duke of York, too, whose early promise succumbed to an early death, soon made the wonder's acquaintance and widened it. Enigmas attract enigmas. Lord Shelburne was enchanted with Sterne. They corresponded to the close, and through the statesman the famous portrait of Sterne descended to Bowood. Reynolds painted him for the first time this March (he was to paint him afresh on his return from France), and in the following year, on the verge of starting on that journey, he again frequented Sir Joshua's studio, not this time as a

¹ For this new anecdote cf *Notes and Queries*, ser vi 446

recounts his triumphs in secret The note is one of admiration—for himself “MY DEAR KITTY [it runs], I should be most unhappy myself, and I know you would be so too, if I did not write to you by this post, tho’ I have not yet heard a word from you Let me know, my sweet Lass! how you go on without me, and be very particular in everything My lodging is every hour full of your Great People of the first rank, who strive who shall most honour me, even all the Bishops have sent their Compts to me, and I set out on Monday to pay my visits to them all I am to dine with Lord Chesterfield this week etc etc, and next Sunday Lord Rockingham takes me to Court I have snatched this single moment, tho’ there is company in my room, to tell my dear, dear Kitty this and that I am hers for ever and ever” And he had sat down to talk with her before, on the very verge of moving to his new splendour¹ “I have arrived here safe and sound,” he confided, “except for the Hole in my Heart, which you have made like a dear, enchanting slut as you are I shall take lodgings this morning in Piccadilly or the Haymarket, and before I seal this letter will let you know where to direct a letter to me, which letter I shall wait by the return of the Post with great Impatience So write, my dear Love, without fail I have the greatest Honors paid and most Civility shown me, that were ever known from the great, and am engaged already to 10 Noble Men and Men of fashion to dine Mr G[arrick] pays me all and more honour than I could look for I dined with him to-day and he has promised numbers of Great People to carry me to dine with ’em He has given me an order for the Liberty of his Boxes and all other part of his house for the whole Season, and indeed

¹ The letter as printed is misdated 8th May, which is clearly a slip for 8th March

leaves nothing undone that can do me either Service or Credit ; he has undertaken the management of the Book-sellers, and will procure me a good price—But more of this in my next. And now, my dear, dear girl ! Let me assure you of the truest friendship for you that ever man bore towards a woman. Where ever I am, my heart is warm towards you, and ever shall be till it is cold for ever.” That Sterne nourished this feeling is proved from the permanence of his allusions. That he could be tantalised, perhaps flattered, by jealousy, is evident from the next sentence. “I thank you for the kind proof you give me of your Love and of Yr. desire to make my heart easy in ordering yourself to be denied to—you know who ;—Whilst I am so miserable to be separated from my dear, dear Kitty, it would have stabbed my soul to have thought such a fellow could have the Liberty of coming near you, I therefore take this proof of your Love and good Principle most kindly, and have as much faith and dependance upon you in it, as if I were at yr. Elbow ; would to God I was at this moment ! But I am sitting solitary and alone in my bed-chamber (10 o’clock at night after the Play), and would give a guinea for a squeeze of Yr. hand. I send my soul perpetually out to see what you are a doing ;—wish I could send my Body with it. Adieu, dear and kind Girl ! And believe me ever Yr. kind friend and most affte. Admirer. I go to the Oratorio this night.—Adieu ! adieu !

“ P.S.—My Service to yr. Mama.

“ Direct to me in the Pall Mall, at Ye 2nd House from St Alban’s Street.

“ *To Miss Formantel,*
 “ at Mrs Joliff’s,
 “ In Stone Gate,
 “ YORK.”

Sly rogue ! There are always postscripts It is always ten at night, and solitude endears her to him, for it is then that he feels the rebound and craves a tenderness in the distance Had Mrs Sterne walked in to disturb his nocturnal reveries, he would have shuddered, but he hugs the illusion of his Kitty's presence If only she could come ! And why should a friend not come ? Discretion he sends to the winds, and if bishops are scandalised—but no, they will never set eyes on the snug bower of his Catherine He is now powerful He will speak to the managers, he will get her a London engagement The bishops can hear her sing if they will So after a space he persuades her to come up with her mother and take rooms in Meard's Court near St Anne's Church, Soho But she delayed too long Not till April the fourteenth did she quit Stonegate, and as her admirer was bound early next month for Windsor, he bemoans the separation that mars the height of his pleasure

Did he now permit himself (as he was certainly to do in the case of Eliza) to indulge the disgusting prospect of his wife's decease ? His words are dubious, but as yet they do not quite seem to bear this construction "These separations, my dear Kitty, however grievous to us both, must be for the present God will open a Dore when we shall sometimes be much more together, and enjoy our Desires without fear of interruption" He brims over with his triumphs "I have 14 engagements to dine now in my Books with the first Nobility I have scarce time to tell you how much I love you, my dear Kitty, and how much I pray to God that you may so live and so love me as one day to share my great good fortune My fortunes will certainly be made, but more of this when we meet Adieu, adieu ! Write, and believe me your affte friend,

L S

"Compts to Mama"

Let us hope in charity that the participation in his fortune implies a wish to requite her for that early letter of introduction : let Yorick at least have the benefit of the doubt. It is scarcely credible that at this juncture he could wish his recovering wife to die. Not only have we a long memorandum of the following year, couched in a strain of tender anxiety, but also the letter written to Mrs Montagu in honour of the woman. Elsewhere, too, he protests his pride in her mind and manners ; and though Mrs Sterne (perhaps conscious of Kitty) asks Mrs Montagu whether she thinks favouritism the "way to make a bad husband better," she certainly now acquiesced in his errors.¹

But though Sterne may be absolved of cold cruelty, he can scarcely be absolved of random anticipation ; and of this the next letter can leave no doubt. Will-o'-the-wisp is elusive, and perhaps the less we pry below the surface, the better. Only at times did he soften towards his tormentress. When she suffered, he was affectionate long after even the show of attachment had vanished. But when she was apathetic, he let her slip from his regard, and it was chiefly in connection with her daughter that he thought of her at all. At least his successes would replenish their store.

On the tenth of March the living of Coxwold at last fell vacant ; and Lord Fauconberg lost no time in presenting Prince Fortunatus with the living. Nor did Prince Fortunatus lose a moment in acquainting Miss Kitty with the tidings. "Tho' I have but a moment of time to spare," he says, "I wd. not omit writing you an account of my good Fortune ; my Lord Fauconberg has this day given me a hundred and sixty pounds a year wch. I hold with all my preferment, so that all or the most part of my sorrows and tears are going to be wiped away. I have but one obstacle to my happiness now left, and what that is you know as

¹ Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol II p 176 The communication is undated

well as I I assure you, my Kitty, that Tristram is the Fashion Pray to God I may see my dearest girl soon and well—Adieu ! Your affectionate Friend ”

To Meard's Court, Kitty and her mother duly repaired, and here a new trifle of evidence comes into view Sterne constantly frequented Ranelagh—scarcely a fitting scene, thought some, for a village pastor At Ranelagh Kitty wanted to perform this very spring, and Sterne used his influence with the Covent Garden Manager for the purpose If she failed for the moment, she was certainly singing there during the next autumn and in the course of the following year In that year, when Sterne revisited London, he wrote, he says, “a kind of Shandean sing-song dramatic piece of Rhyme for Mr *Beard*—and he sang it at Ranelagh as well as on his own stage [Covent Garden], for the benefit of Someone-or-Other ”¹ “Someone-or-Other ” must mean Kitty de Fourmentelle, since a *Public Advertiser* of September 1760 advertises a “Collection of Songs sung by Mr Beard, Miss Stevenson, and Miss Fourmentell at Ranelagh,” and composed by Joseph Baildon A reference to the book discloses the “Dialogue” between “Mr Beard and Miss *Fromantel*” as Swain and Nymph respectively Baildon's part seems confined to the music Was Sterne, even thus early, the impenitent librettist, and did Kitty sing his doggerel even before he left town in the late spring ? A book of songs often succeeded their performance The lines go as follows, and another letter of Sterne acquaints us that they were mistaken for Garrick's, in whose house he wrote them ²—

¹ Cf *The Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne*, Logographic Press (1788), p 60 That this mention refers to 1760 is shown from the next sentence, which says that Sterne could not refuse Beard's request, for “a year before ” he had presented him with the freedom of Covent Garden Theatre.

² Cf *The Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne*, published by his daughter, Mrs Medalle (Becket, 1775), p 107 “Who told you that Garrick

“How imperfect the joys of the soul,
 How insipid Life’s journey must be,
 How unsocial the Seasons must roll,
 To the wretches who dare not be free.”

Kitty’s disappointment at not securing an immediate engagement appears from still another of Sterne’s letters. “I received,” he says, “your dear letter, which gave me much pleasure, with some pain about Ranelagh ; but never, my dear girl, be dejected ; something else will offer and turn out in another quarter. Thou mayest be assured nothing in this world shall be wanting that I can do with discretion. I love you most tenderly, and you shall ever find me the same man of Honour and Truth. Write me what night you may be in town that I may keep myself at liberty to fly to thee. God bless you, my dear Kitty.—Thy faithful

“L. STERNE.

“P.S.—There is a fine print going to be done of me, so I shall make the most of myself and sell inside and out. I take care of myself, but am hurried off my legs by going to great people. I am to be presented to the Prince.

“My service to your Mama.”

Did he make the most of himself “inside” ? “Honour” and “Truth” ! Here, methinks, soft Yorick protests too much. He had better have stuck to the commonplaces of the ditty. In any case, Sterne was “free” enough : he could never contract his sentimental journeyings, though, to do him justice, neither did he conceal his *détours* in doubtful continents. He painted them in moral colours, but at no stage of this Fourmentelle episode does he appear to moral advantage. All that can be said is that both towards

wrote the medley for Beard ? ’Twas wrote in his house however, and before I left Town” (Sterne to Mrs F, “my witty Widow,” Coxwold, 30th August 1761)

Kitty and his wife he seems, externally, to have been kind and generous, an easy-going means of shriving conscience. Nor did he ever betray people—he boasted with truth that never had he “forfeited a friendship.” He sought to atone for his heart by his head, or rather his feelings. If he preached beyond his practice, he tried to reconcile that practice with his preaching through the medium of the emotions. To the last he not only asserted but thought that he had squared the moral circle—his taper sent out its glow to all humanity, and persons were only details. One thing, however, is clear. His interest in Kitty was maintained, as is proved even by her musical engagement in the following year.

As the season’s prodigy grew more and more in request, his visits to the daughter and mother became less frequent. He put off his dearest with attentions. “As I cannot propose the pleasure of your company longer than till 4 o’clock this afternoon,” he writes, “I have sent you a ticket for the Play, and hope you will go there, that I may have the satisfaction of hoping you are entertained when I am not. You are the most engaging creature and I never spend an evening with you, but I leave a fresh part of my heart behind me. You will get me all, piece by piece, I find, before all is over, and yet I cannot think how I can be ever more than what I am at present. *P S*—I may be with you soon after 2 o’clock, if not at 2, so get yr dinner over by then.”

But Sterne’s “pieces” were multiplied by the miracle of his triumphs, and only a morsel could be spared for Meard’s Court. “I was so intent upon drinking my tea with you this afternoon,” sighs the sinner, “that I forgot I had been engaged all this week to visit a Gentleman’s Family on this day. I think I mentioned it in the beginning of the week, but your dear company put that with many other things

out of my head. I will, however, contrive to give my dear friend a call at 4 o'clock ; tho' by-the-bye, I think it not quite prudent ; but what has Prudence, my dear girl, to do with love ? In this I have no government, at least not half so much as I ought. I hope, my dear Kitty has it and good night. May all your days and nights be happy ! Some time it may and will be more in my power to make them so—Adieu.

“ If I am prevented calling at 4 I will call at 7.”

Did he go ? I trow not. There were great men and great ladies clamouring for Tristram, and the fragments of his “ heart ” were being raffled for by the frivolous. The tone of his promises soon sinks to *diminuendo*. “ If it would have saved my life,” runs his last letter, “ I have not one hour or half hour in my power since I saw you on Sunday ; Else my dear Kitty may be sure I should not have been thus absent. Every minute of this day and to-morrow is pre-engaged [so] that I am so much a prisoner as if I was in Jail. I beg, dear girl, you will believe I do not spend an hour where I wish, for I wish to be with you always . but Fate orders my steps, God knows how, for the present.—Adieu, adieu. On Sunday at 2 o'clock I will see you.”

Yet she never slipped out of his mind. He frisked on, and whisked off, but she was there. With all that is blameworthy in this curious courtship, the unknown Kitty stands out mysterious and alluring. What became of one whom Sterne's pages commemorate up to the last year of his life ? One would like to indulge a fancy, to imagine that, like her sister, she may have joined the Roman communion, and that at the final hour when Sterne lay dying alone in Bond Street, she came, habited perchance as a Sister of Charity, to soothe his death-bed. A fancy it is and must remain, yet stranger things have happened, and

the chapter of the not impossible is the most attractive in literature as in life

Sterne had won an audience, but his fame did not march unchallenged. The critics crowded their watch-tower, looking out for all his zigzags, his frailty and fickleness both as man and writer. The *Monthly Review* led the way, and was followed by the sour Smollett's young men in the *Critical Review*. Gossip was of course added to censure, and one Dr Hill, in the *Female Magazine*, professed to give an account of the innovator's antecedents and present his doings, his wayward steps and clerical errors. The more dubious portions of *Tristram* were trounced. There is a story of the time that illustrates the scandal, and will be new to most. Sterne, it was said, protested to Garrick his abhorrence of loose literature. Whoever issued such books, he declared, ought to be hung before his own house-door. "But *you*, I believe, live in lodgings," was the actor's reply¹. To one who objected that his humour was "too gay and free for the colour of his coat," Sterne spoke out his inner mind. His book, he said, was himself, "the understrapping virtue of prudence" would only spoil "the air and originality," those "slighter touches which identify it from all others of the same stamp." He denied that he had gone as far as Swift, who himself "kept a due distance from Rabelais", and Swift had "said a hundred things" he durst not say unless he was "Dean of St Patrick's". He admitted that he "sporting too much" with "his own wit," but he had suppressed much already. The "happiness of Cervantic humour," he added, lay "in describing silly and trifling events with the circumstantial pomp of great ones." To purge his work would emasculate it².

¹ From a contemporary cutting in an album belonging to Mr Fritz Reiss

² This very interesting letter (undated) was printed in the *Archivist* (vol vii p 40) as belonging to Mr F Barker. Professor Cross, without

Later (in 1762), even Goldsmith, the most human of humourists, the simplest of critics, found him not only wanton but dull. His familiarity he resented; he misconstrued his style. He laughed that Sterne talked in riddles and pulled men by the nose: "He must speak of himself, and his chapters, and his manner, and what he would be at, and his own importance, and his mother's importance, with the most un pitying prolixity, . . . smiling without a jest, and without wit professing vivacity."¹ But when Goldsmith condemned Sterne, the best of *Tristram Shandy* was yet in store. Surely the lover of kindly nature must have welcomed Trim and Toby, though much of their neighbourhood was not laid in his own lavender. And when Goldsmith tried to provoke Dr Johnson (who would tease him for the same egoisms) into a verdict of dulness, the pope of London's "Why no, sir," silenced him.

Sterne well knew how to defend himself against most of his censors, nor did he conciliate them by his peculiar, half-sentimental mockery. He might be said to have given them a foretaste in the second volume of *Tristram*, where he penned Uncle Toby's address to the fly—an appeal against retaliation which, surely, was as ironical as it was sentimental. "Go, says he, one day at dinner to an overgrown one who had buzzed about his nose and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time,—and which after infinite attempts, he had caught at last as it flew by him;—I'll not hurt thee, says my Uncle Toby rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand;—I'll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go, says he, lifting up the sash and opening his hand as he

citing the source, only gives the sentence from it relating to Swift (*cf* his *Life*, p 179) The struggle in Sterne lay between the ferment of his brain and the preferment which Fothergill and other friends feared that *Tristram* would preclude.

¹ *The Citizen of the World*, letter 52

spoke to let it escape , go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me " What author would withhold his assent? As time went on and revilers increased, Sterne pricked them again and again under varying figures Now, he would sort them into learned and unlearned the latter "busied in getting down to the bottom of the well where Truth keeps her little court", the former "pumping her up through the conduits of dialectic induction" —"They concerned Themselves not with facts—they reasoned" Now, he would deride their minutiae in the parlance of the theatre — "And how did *Garrick* speak the soliloquy last night? Oh, against all rule, my lord,—most ungrammatically! betwixt the substantive and the adjective, which should agree together in *number case* and *gender*, he made a breach thus—stopping as if the point wanted settling, and betwixt the nominative case, which your lordship knows should govern the verb, he suspended his voice in the epilogue a dozen times, three seconds and three-fifths by a stop watch—Admirable grammarian! But in suspending his voice—was the sense suspended likewise? Did not expression of attitude or countenance fill up the chasm? Did you narrowly look? I looked only at the stop watch, my lord—Excellent observer!" The philosophy of the stop-watch will never be out of date Now, he disposed of them with less good-nature as a troop of jackasses —"How they viewed and reviewed us as we passed over the rivulet at the bottom of that little valley—and when we climbed over that hill, and were just getting out of sight—good God! what a braying did they all set up together! Prithee, Shepherd! who keeps all those Jackasses? Heaven be their comforter—what, are they never curried?—Are they never taken in in winter? Bray, bray—bray Bray on—the world is deeply your debtor,—Louder still—that is nothing, in good sooth, you

are ill used :—was I a Jack-Ass, I solemnly declare I would bray G-sol-re-at from morning even unto night.”

It was the old warfare between lecture and literature. And to this was added a succession of libellous imitations, defilements of his English and his meaning. As for his innuendoes, he always maintained that they were misunderstood by dullards, that they only derided mock gravity and quack self-importance ; in every respect Sterne put himself forward as *homme incompris*, just as he himself always affected the *femme incomprise*. Not wholly or in each such instance is Tristram to be trusted ; he could not trust himself ; and he sought to compound with offended friends and incensed enemies by leaving a blank page in his sixth volume—the one page, he said, in this “thrice happy book,” which “malice will not blacken and which ignorance cannot misrepresent.” In the main, however, there is truth in these excuses. It has been touched on before, and it will be touched on again. We have seen that his accusers literalised the double meanings which are seldom patent, and often strike at some pasteboard idol. They were imperceptive. If they went out of their way to take heavily what was intended lightly, was that wholly the author’s fault ? He ought not to have used mud-missiles or to have danced through gutters. But neither should they have ignored his aim and direction. They talked as if Sterne purposed a praise of Priapus. They picked the pellets to pieces, they splashed the dirt around him, but much of the refuse adhered to themselves.

And here we are brought face to face with the brawniest of his pummellers, William Warburton, who had just received his reward for a lifelong pugilism by the bishopric of Gloucester. Warburton was a stentor and bully, who had bruised his way into public notice and vociferated his claim to force genius under his protection. So he had done with the credulous Pope ; and Bolingbroke, who then

tried conclusions with him over the *Essay on Man*, well said that he was like a chimney-sweep, because, whenever he came to close quarters, he blackened you in the process. So quarrelsome was Warburton that his own wife once threw a book at him after a dispute, exclaiming, "If you will not listen to *me*, perhaps you will listen to a book." He was very proud of his books, and very pleased when he found his heart-breaking treatise on the *Divine Legation of Moses* mentioned in *Tristram Shandy*. Warburton longed for acquaintance with the new genius, as he was soon to term him. Always cautious, however, he made inquiries, but he soon told his friend Garrick that these had elicited nothing but praise of the clergyman—a bishop might safely patronise him. Through Garrick the two came together, but the real cause of their meeting has escaped biographers, who have removed the incident to a subsequent phase of their squabble. It was bruited (quite falsely, according to Sterne) that the pedant himself was to figure in future volumes as their hero's bear-leader. This was naturally too much for Warburton. How Sterne took it is shown by his well-known letter to Garrick, scribbled shortly before midnight. The effusiveness of his mien betrays that want of dignity, that hysterical sensitiveness which disfigures the man —

"'Twas for all the world like a cut across my finger with a sharp penknife. I saw the blood—gave it a suck—wrapt it up—and thought no more about it. But there is more goes to the healing of a wound than this comes to—a wound (unless it is a wound not worth talking of, but by-the-bye, mine is) must give you some pain after—Nature will take her own way with it,—it must ferment—it must digest. Was there no one learned blockhead throughout the many schools of misapplied science in the Christian world to make a tutor of for my Tristram? Are we so run out of stock that there is

no one lumber-headed, muddle-headed, mortar-headed, pudding-headed *Chap* amongst our doctors but I must disable my judgment by choosing a Warburton. Vengeance! Have I so little concern for the honour of my hero?—Am I a wretch so devoid of sense, so bereft of feeling for the figure he should make in story, that I should choose a preceptor to rob him of all the immortality that I intended him? O! Dear Mr Garrick. Malice is ingenious—Unless where the excess of it outwits itself. . . . The report might draw the blood of the author of *Tristram Shandy*—it could not harm such a man as the author of the *Divine Legation*—God bless him! Though (by-the-bye, and according to the natural course of descents) the blessing should come from him to me. *Pray have you any interest, lateral or collateral, to get me introduced to his Lordship?*”

The last sentence proves how Sterne first found his way to Warburton. The prelate was soon convinced that rumour lied. Sterne duly called at Grosvenor Square and was rewarded with a purse of guineas, some classical books, and Warburton's good wishes for his better success in authorship. The pompous Bishop evidently hoped to crush his *protégé* with benedictions. Sterne took the money, the books, and the blessings, but all went as lightly as they were got. He cared not one brass farthing for Warburton or his works. Gradually the literary godfather grew suspicious of this “philandering Faustus”—the godchild who frequented Ranelagh and coquetted under the rose. Hill's *Female Magazine* proved one eye-opener; two sets of verses which Hall-Stevenson published with Dodsley, not, it would seem, without Sterne's connivance, were another.¹ The first

¹ “Two Lyric Epistles One to my Cousin Shandy on his Coming to Town, and the other to the Grown Gentlewomen, the Misses — [York] Printed for R & J Dodsley in Pall Mall, 1760” These verses were afterwards printed in Hall-Stevenson's *Collected Works*

of these rallied "my Cousin Shandy" on coming to town after being stoned by York children His transformation was compared to the plight of Jonah when disgorged by the whale, and the change from pelting parishioners to applauding drawing-rooms was hinted by the analogy of Elijah and the boys whom the bears devoured This, Warburton subsequently assured Sterne, put him in a very "mean light" But the second of these lyrics was much more scandalous It encouraged two "young ladies of York," eager for escapades in the metropolis Sterne, it was bruited, had a hand in this manifestly Crazyite concoction, and what was a bishop to do with a pastor of such black sheep as these?

The possibility of Sterne's share in the rubbish was accentuated by the following stanza —

"When a Man's saying all he has to say,
And something comes across the way,
Without a Provocation
I do not call it a Digression,
But a Temptation
Which requires Discretion
And therefore I petition
For leave to give a Definition
Of the word Reputation,
'Tis an Impression or a Seal
Engraved, not upon steel
On a transparent Education
Which held up to the Light,
Discovers all the strokes and touches
That mark the Lady of a Knight,
A Mantua-maker, or a Duchess "

A still sharper stone of offence succeeded Babble whispered that Warburton had bestowed the purse in order to silence Sterne for the future, and that his guineas had been hush-money ill-bestowed The Bishop was beside

himself, but Sterne cared for none of these things. No sooner had he returned home in the summer, than he implored his patron to subscribe for the first volumes of his *Sermons*, and, tongue in cheek, hoped to profit by his advice. All the same, he would pursue his humour his own way, and without mutilation :—"Laugh, my lord, I will, and as loud as I can too." Warburton, pleased that Sterne would "do justice" to his "genius," persisted in friendly warnings :—"You say you will continue to laugh loud in good time. But one who is no more than even a man of spirit would choose to laugh in good company ; where priests and virgins may be present." Nobody, he told Sterne with great good sense, had been ever written out of the reputation he had once fairly won but by himself. He plumed himself on his prompt and warm commendation of *Tristram Shandy* to all the best company in town, albeit another ecclesiastic had taken him to task, but naturally he could not stomach the insinuation that he had bought off Sterne from ridiculing familiar foibles. "The fellow himself," he assured Hurd at the close of 1761, "is an incorrigible scoundrel."¹ But even so, he retained a sneaking fondness for this feather-brained heretic. "I have done my best," he told Garrick, shortly after Sterne's petition about the *Sermons*, "I have done my best to prevent his playing the fool in a worse sense than I have the charity to think he intends. I have discharged my part to him. I esteem him a man of genius, and am desirous he will enable me to esteem him as a clergyman." Where Warburton is to be blamed is for trying to annex Sterne, and for postponing character to reputation. But he has been wrongly blamed for his after-conduct. He took Sterne up under false pretences which he welcomed ; he dropped him because the pretences were false. Sterne smiled, and Warburton blustered.

¹ Cf *The Garrick Correspondence*, vol 1 p 115 et seq

In closing this farce, we recur to Kitty de Fourmentelle, with whom we set out. In the very letter last mentioned, Warburton thanks Garrick for the "hint received from you by Mr Berenger concerning our heteroclitc parson." Berenger must have whispered something about Catherine Beranger de Fourmentelle. "Dear, dear Kitty" had undone Sterne with Warburton: the screen had fallen, and Joseph Surface took refuge in sentiment.

But there was fame to solace him. The second edition of *Tristram Shandy* was out, and Pitt accepted its dedication. Sterne's name was known beyond Great Britain. A wager had been laid that a letter forwarded to him as "Tristram Shandy, Europe," would reach the celebrity. When Sterne posted to York and Sutton under the summer sunlight, on the road to his new living, a post-boy "pulled off his hat" and presented him with the missive. So says John Croft, whose brother had piloted the unknown penman to London.

Warburton and Kitty de Fourmentelle had been the two poles of his experience. What a parson! What a portent! "I shall write as long as I live" was now his motto. "The Vanity," he said, "of a pretty woman in the hey-day of her Triumphs is a fool to the Vanity of a successful author."¹ If Sterne had only taken that maxim to heart!

¹ This sentence occurs in the letter in which Sterne, before he left London, begged Berenger's influence with Hogarth for illustrations to *Tristram*. Hogarth did one then—that of Trim reading his sermon—and another for the second issue—that of Tristram's christening—both grotesques, and both gratuitously. The writer has seen Hogarth's first sketches for these, and there are variations. In the sermon scene Trim's dropped hat is visible in the foreground, while in the christening scene the basin of water does not stand on the table, but is overturned by the window. The true version of this letter, in which Sterne urged "*orna me*, sighed Swift to Pope," has been given for the first time by Professor Wilbur Cross in his preface (p. viii) to his *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*.

himself, but Sterne cared for none of these things. Sooner had he returned home in the summer, implored his patron to subscribe for the first volume of his *Sermons*, and, tongue in cheek, hoped to profit by the advice. All the same, he would pursue his humour his way, and without mutilation:—"Laugh, my lord, I and as loud as I can too." Warburton, pleased that Sterne would "do justice" to his "genius," persisted in friendly warnings:—"You say you will continue to laugh loud a good time. But one who is no more than even a man of spirit would choose to laugh in good company; where priests and virgins may be present." Nobody, he told Sterne with great good sense, had been ever written out of the reputation he had once fairly won but by himself. He plumed himself on his prompt and warm commendation of *Tristram Shandy* to all the best company in town, albeit another ecclesiastic had taken him to task, but naturally he could not stomach the insinuation that he had bought off Sterne from ridiculing familiar foibles. "The fellow himself," he assured Hurd at the close of 1761, "is an incorrigible scoundrel."¹ But even so, he retained a sneaking fondness for this feather-brained heretic. "I have done my best," he told Garrick, shortly after Sterne's petition about the *Sermons*, "I have done my best to prevent his playing the fool in a worse sense than I have the charity to think he intends. I have discharged my part to him. I esteem him a man of genius, and am desirous he will enable me to esteem him as a clergyman." Where Warburton is to be blamed is for trying to annex Sterne, and for postponing character to reputation. But he has been wrongly blamed for his after-conduct. He took Sterne up under false pretences which he welcomed; he dropped him because the pretences were false. Sterne smiled, and Warburton blustered.

¹ Cf. *The Garrick Correspondence*, vol. 1 p. 115 et seq.

ship's seat and park 'Tis a very agreeable ride out in the chaise I purchased for my wife—Lydia has a Pony which she delights in—Whilst they take their diversion, I am scribbling away at my *Tristram* These two volumes are, I think, the best— 'tis in fact my Hobby Horse, and so much am I delighted with my Uncle Toby's imagined character that I am becoming Enthusiast—My Lydia helps to copy for me—and my wife knits and listens as I read her chapters "

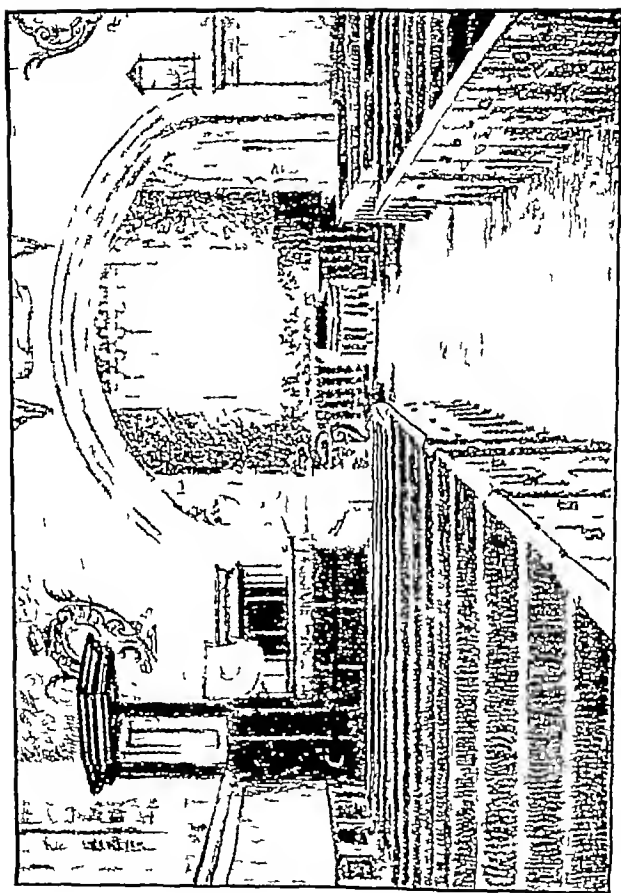
A pleasing picture, and so is the complement "I am as happy as a Prince at Coxwold," he said, even in the last year of his life, "I wish you could see in how princely a manner I live—'tis a land of plenty I sit down alone to venison, fish and wildfowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with curds and strawberries, and cream, and all the simple plenty which a rich valley can produce—with a clean cloth on my table—and a bottle of wine on my right hand to drink your health. I have a hundred hens and chickens about my yard—and not a parishioner catches a hare, or a rabbit, or a trout, but he brings it as an offering to me If solitude would cure a love-sick heart [Eliza, not Kitty], I would give you an invitation—but absence and time lessens attachment that virtue inspires I am in high spirits—never enters this gate—I take the air every day in my st-chaise with my two long-tailed Horses and as myself, I think I am better on the whole" Nor, when he writes "happy as a Prince," should we forget the happier phrase by which he adorned a proverb, when, speaking of a postillion, he said that he sat "as *horizontal* as a king "

And now hear him in *Tristram Shandy*, where he protests his wish for economy "I am persuaded there is not any Prince, Prelate, Pope, or Potentate, great or small upon earth, more desirous in his heart to keep straight with the

world than I am—or who takes more likely means for it. I never give above half a guinea or walk with boots, or cheapen toothpicks—or lay out one shilling upon a handbox the year round; and for the six months I am in the country I am upon so small a scale that with all the good temper in the world I out-do Rousseau a bar length—for I keep neither man, or boy, or horse or cow, or dog or cat, or anything that can eat or drink, except a thin poor piece of a vestal (to keep my fire in and who has as bad an appetite as myself). But if you think this makes a Philosopher of me—I would not, my good people! give a rush for your judgment. True Philosophy—but there is no treating the subject whilst my Uncle is whistling Lilliabullero.—Let us go into the house.”

In this frugal paradise he sat down, and his taste must have revelled in the graceful church, with its hexagonal tower and the circular gate to its Communion rail. The chancel is Norman, the pulpit still retains the Georgian staircase and sounding-board, while the large church-yard still groups the stones together like flocks of sheep. Hard by, stands the gabled habitation which he christened “Shandy Hall,” and where he would work all day and half the night, shippared, unshaven, and in dressing-gown, under the promptings of his “Demons.” Since divided into two tenements,¹ it still wears the mediæval aspect suitable to the old folios that supplied his “hobby horses,” and he might almost have fancied himself on a broomstick flying up the chimney to the moon. Lord Fauconberg saved Sterne’s genius. Had he remained at

¹ Shandy Hall is now let to two tenants by its owner, Sir G. Wombwell. Before it was divided, a Dr Spensely used to live there, and three successive carriers to York and Thrusk markets occupied it afterwards. The father of the present sexton also lived and died there. Carriers and sextons—these were after Sterne’s own heart, and it almost seems as if his sprites had arranged the tenement.



Sutton, he would probably have drooped and died, and we should have lost the best scenes of *Tristram Shandy* and the finest pastels of the *Sentimental Journey*. But even now his treacherous enemy threatened him, while his eagerness for town aggravated the malady till it drove him abroad.

Might and main he toiled at *Tristram Shandy*, delighting in Uncle Toby and revelling in those perilous romances which suggested the fable about whiskers, but, above all, there then emanated from him that wonderful story of Le Fevre, which he sent in advance to Lady Spencer, while her husband requited him with a silver standish which he prized as much as they did his dedication.

Unseen voices he thought inspired him—he was never tired of saying that his words ran unpremeditated, that “My pen governs me—I govern not it.” As he wrote, the ink dropped aimlessly, for his absence of mind contrasted with the smart effect of his writing. Out he would wander alone, perhaps as far as the long wall (yet extant) where Obadiah collided with Dr Slop, till a fresh thought sent him hurrying home.¹ At this time more than any other, he seems to have led the life of his fancy. “Oh, for a life of sensations instead of thoughts!” once sighed Keats. This was now the existence of Sterne, and the sensations were keener in loneliness than they had been in company. Not that he was quite oblivious of the world. September saw the marriage of the young king and his bride’s coronation, and Sterne celebrated the occasion by roasting an ox whole for his parishioners.

But in the late autumn his fresh volumes, the sudden death of Dodsley, and his itch for London compelled him thitherward, and Kitty too, as we have seen, may also have summoned him. He seems to have arrived in the first days of December, nor was it long ere he plunged into the

¹ Cf. Professor Cross’s *Life*, pp. 236–7

old vortex, consorting with fresh wastrels (tainted wits like Foote, merry reprobates like Wilkes and Delaval), but also with reputable celebrities. Not only did the Spencers adopt him, he struck up a close friendship with the meteoric Charles Townshend, the wit among statesmen, the statesman among wits, the prince of improvisatores. Under his auspices he heard the critical debates of that critical moment. Pitt had just surrendered the seals; the Seven Years' War had but two years more to run; Frederick the Great soon made terms with his enemy. All England was divided into "Prussians" and "Anti-Prussians"; and Sterne, for Croft's benefit and his wife's, despatched graphic accounts of what struck him in the House, including Pitt's absence through a "politic fit of the gout." Such was his influence with the leaders that he could now forward the interests of Stephen Croft's young son. The good word of a man of letters still counted for something in the great world.

The bestowal of his books was arranged, and their new publishers, who lasted till the end, were Becket and Dehondt, an eminent firm in the Strand. He hoped to produce two volumes a year. He seemed at the zenith of his fortune. True, old stories hampered him, though they had become old wives' tales. He had scandalised some by lashing Queen Anne's Dr Mead in the person of "Kunastrokius with his Asses' Tails." And he offended again. At Townshend's board he annoyed the redoubtable Dr Mounsey, the Spencers' physician, by a solemn parody of his technical jargon. Doctors, Sterne always hated, and in one of his letters he quotes Bacon to show that they are "old women who sit by your bedside till they kill you, or Nature cures."¹ Such incidents still rankled, while his lighter associates offended the cloth. Dr Johnson met and disdained him, while the graver sort fought justly

¹ Cf *Original Letters* (1788), p 133.

shy of one whom by turns they lectured and loathed. The more Sterne complained of his revilers, the more he went out of his way to make them revile him

But in all the whirligig of this racket a blood-vessel again broke in his lungs. He had been warned of the blow previously—but not in time. No dinner could dispense with him, and he forced himself out. At this very moment his answer to Mrs Montagu's invitation to some great party had been that "he would most assuredly not forget to make himself the happiest man in this Metropolis on the following Friday"¹. He made light of his ailment, though not of a new fascination. Mrs Vesey, the fairy of the Blues, had just met him, to their mutual enchantment. The Blues too indulged in flirtations. They had sauntered at Ranelagh, and her voice, he exclaimed, was that of a cherub. He had listened to it in her "warm cabinet," but now he could scarce whisper an order for gruel—much less his appreciation. Yet though "colds, coughs, and catarrhs" might "tie up the tongue," his heart was "above the little inconveniences of its prison house," and one day would "escape it." Meanwhile, he lost no time in addressing her—"Of the two bad cassocks which I am worth in the world, fair lady, I would this moment freely give the latter of them to find out by what irresistible force of magic it is that I am forced to write a letter to you upon so short an acquaintance." It was not brief, he reflected, in reality. "Intercourses of this kind" were "not to be dated by hours, days, or months—but by the flow or rapid progress of our intimacies which are measured only by their degrees of penetration by which we discover characters at once." Such was his usual form of approach whenever his ivy of sentiment lit on a fit fabric to twine upon. Her beauty, he added, was evident to each common beholder, staring at her

¹ Cf letter in the Autograph Collection of Mr H. H. Raphael

"as a Dutch boor does at the queen of Sheba"; but her tender and gentle modulations—these required "a deeper research." "You are a system of harmonic vibrations," he went on, "the softest and best attuned of all instruments." He would gladly part with his other cassock to touch her; "but in giving my last rag of priesthood for that pleasure, I should be left quite naked."¹ While the "prison-house" detained him, he wrote of her with rapture to Mrs Montagu. Poor Kitty was quite eclipsed. "Never in my life," he said, "did I see anything so truly graceful as she is, nor had I an idea until I saw her that Grace could be so perfect in all its parts, and so suited to the higher ordinances of the first Life, from the superintending impulse of the mind." Hers, he added, was one "attuned to every virtue, and a nature of the first order—beaming through a form of the first beauty." Before the Ranelagh jaunt, it would seem, she had received both him and Lord Bath, the infirm but evergreen old statesman, and she had revived them both. When his efforts at last failed to brave out his illness, she it was who came "in the form of a pitying angel," made his "tisane," and played at picquet with him to prevent his attempts at conversation. About all this he poured out his heart to Mrs Montagu. "In short," he cried, "if I had ever so great an inclination to cross the gulph, while such a woman beckoned me to stay,—I could not depart."

Sterne had agreed to visit Reynolds's studio (while the artist painted the last portrait ever taken of Lord Bath), to amuse the politician who had once helped Bolingbroke against Walpole. And the worn veteran told Mrs Montagu

¹ Cf the two letters "to Mrs V" contained respectively in *Sterne's Letters to his Friends* (1775), p 44 *et seq*, and in *Original Letters* (1788), p 205 *et seq*. This episode is here fully presented for the first time from the collation of these letters with the Montagu ones printed in Mrs Climensson's book. Professor Cross is mistaken in thinking that Sterne first met Mrs Vesey some three years later at Bath

how much he wanted to converse with "Mr Tristram Shandy" So Tristram ventured to criticise a face which wore, he thought, too painful an expression, and recommended that Lord Bath should sit instead of standing for the likeness Was Yorick in bed when the day came round for him to sparkle at Leicester Square? It would have needed a Mrs Vesey to detain him

The strain cost Sterne dear It was now imperative that he should leave England If he was rash enough to risk the winter in London, he would never, he wrote, see another spring He begged Mrs Montagu "not to shed a tear" for him "in vain," yet he constantly contemplated himself dying Should she drop more than one over her friend when he was dead, it would soothe him, he said, while he was alive But he trusted that though something in his death, whenever it happened, might distress her, there would be something also of comfort in remembrance when he was "laid beneath the marble" "But why do I talk of Marble,—I should say beneath the sod"

"For cover my head with a turf, or a stone
'Twill be all one—
'Twill be all one"¹

Solemn and tearful he sat down four days before the new year to make a last provision for his wife and daughter His "Memorandum" was addressed to Mrs Sterne, but deposited with his correspondent, "Our Cosin—not because she is our Cosin, but because I am sure she has a good heart" He enumerated all the papers that might be published for the profit of the survivors "The

¹ The preceding particulars are derived from a combination of Lord Bath's letters to Mrs Montagu in *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. II pp 268-9, and the letter (evidently to Mrs Montagu) headed "Saturday evening" in the *Original Letters of the late Rev Mr Laurence Sterne, Never Before Published*, Logographic Press (1788)

large piles of letters in the Garrets at York" were "to be sifted in search for some either of Wit or Humour, or, what is better than both, of Humanity and Good Nature—These will make a couple of volumes *more*, and as not one of 'em was ever wrote, like Pope's or Voiture's, to be printed, they are more likely to be read." He had drawn his will. He left all to Elizabeth and Lydia Sterne; they need not "quarrel about it." His "Estate," he estimated, would bring in £1800 or more, outside what might be "raised" from his works and the sale of the last copyright. All so far realised, except £50, remained in his booksellers' hands: Garrick would receive and invest it. He advised that his effects and library should be sold, and the proceeds be laid out in Government securities. He thought much of his daughter. "If my Lydia should marry," he wrote, "I charge you—I charge you over again (that you may remember it the more)—That upon no Delusive prospect, or promise from any one, you leave yourself DEPENDENT; reserve enough for your comfort—or let her wait your Death" £200 would be due from his Living. Should Lydia predecease her mother, he begged Mrs Sterne to remember his poor sister, and he added the dramatic postscript, "We shall meet again." This is the document on to which two of the tears which Sterne shed at the prospect have trickled: it is the sole known receptacle of that incessant fountain. "But thou wilt number my tears," he was to tell Eliza, as he wept in sickness, "and put them all in thy bottle." A dozen bottles would not have sufficed, even had they been jeroboams.

The vista before him looked sombre. In the full flush of festival he descried the writing on the wall. And he invoked those unfailing spirits which, he has told us, when "Death himself knocked at his door," "bade him go away, and did it in such a gay tone of careless indifference

Dear Garrick.

Upon reviewing my finances,
this morning, wth some unforeseen
expences — I find I should set out
with 20 p^d less — than a prudent
man ought — will you lend me
twenty pounds.
Y^{rs} L. Sterne

STERNE'S LETTER TO GARRICK

From an old facsimile

that he doubted of his commission—There must be some mistake, quoth he " But Death, as *Tristram* draws him, was not to be put off In he strode Sterne faced him with light bravado He might pull ever so hard at his throat, but his clutches should be baffled The arch-enemy might run after him, he would still win in the race "By Heaven! I will lead him a dance he little thinks of—for I will gallop . . . without looking once behind me, to the banks of the Garonne, and if I hear him clattering at my heels—I'll scamper away to Mount Vesuvius " Hall-Stevenson was in town and led him to his chaise "*Allons*, said I, the Post-boy gave a crack with his whip—off I went like a cannon, and in half a dozen bounds, got into *Dover* "

Sadly as he must have felt, his "spirits" came to the rescue Now, as in future crises, he commended himself "entirely to Dame Nature"—the "dear goddess" who had saved him in so many bouts, that he entertained "a kind of enthusiasm in her favour" "Neck or nothing" was his habit, "as for life and death," he wrote, "I love to run hazards rather than die by inches" His nonchalance finds quaint expression in the request made to Garrick a little earlier for an advance of twenty pounds The sum, it may be guessed, was repaid, or Garrick would hardly have continued so cordial As this letter finds no place in the printed collections, it will be read with interest —

"PARSONAGE HOUSE,

"COXWOLD, YORKSHIRE.

"DEAR GARRICK,—Upon reviewing my finances this morning with some unforeseen expenses—I find I should set out with 20 pds less than a prudent man ought—Will you lend me twenty pounds?—Ys, L STERNE"¹

¹ It was facsimiled on a sheet headed by a view of *Shandy Hall*, and published in 1835 by C J Smith of Southampton Street. The original seems now to be in the ownership of Mr A. H. Joline of New York Cf Professor Cross's *Lt/e*, p 528 Professor Cross does not transcribe it.

“Prudent” is a charming touch. Looking back on this brief appeal a decade afterwards, Garrick perhaps might have deemed it worthy of Sheridan, and at this moment Sterne evidently thought it worth Garrick’s attention. “Money and counters,” he was to inform Eliza, “are of this equal use, in my opinion, that they both serve to set up with.”¹

Not yet was he bound for Vesuvius. His first stop was to be at Paris ; thence he proceeded to the South of France, where, after a time, his wife and daughter joined him. And so, with the forms of fame and beauty before his eyes, half-reeling from the draught that had been held to his lips, yet half-pleased to survey himself as he drank it, off he sped on his gipsy wayfare. He stands, a sentimental traveller before the *Sentimental Journey*, persuaded, despite his errors, that he has the best heart in the world, purposing—well or ill—not to reform his life, but to reap fresh impressions, to remain an artist so long as he lived and strayed. Glimpses of these will succeed hereafter. At present it is time to consider his works and style, for the interest of the author is now absorbed in the interest of the man. As he waits, pale and pensive, on the deck, waving his handkerchief to bid some last adieu, we seem to see embodied in him—or disembodied—that thin borderland of ideas—as opposed on the one hand to affection, on the other, to aspiration—which belongs not to flesh and blood, nor to spirit, but to purely perceptive genius.

¹ *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775), p 80

CHAPTER XIII

STERNE'S AUTHORSHIP

"IMPETUOUS fluid ! The moment thou pressest against the floodgates of the brain—see how they give way ! In swims CURIOSITY, beckoning to her damsels to follow—they dive into the centre of the current—FANCY sits musing upon the bank, and with her eyes following the stream, turns straws and bulrushes into masts and bowsprits And DESIRE, with vest held up to the knee in one hand, snatches at them as they swim by her with the other "——

"For my own part I am but just set up in the business, so know little about it—but, in my opinion, to write a book is for all the world like humming a song—be but in tune with yourself, Madam, 'tis no matter how high or how low you take it "——

"'Tis a sporting little filly-folly—which carries you out of the present hour—a maggot, a butterfly, a fiddlestick—an Uncle Toby's siege—or an *anything*, which a man makes shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solitudes of life—'tis as useful a beast as any in the whole Creation—nor do I really see how the world can do without it "——

These three excerpts from *Tristram Shandy* strike the key-notes of Sterne's authorship and point the distinctions between him and his predecessors Feeling, dreaminess,

music, impressionism, a blend of acted raillery and confession,—all these divide Sterne from the past. Intimacy is their outcome—writing, he said, was only another form of talking—and also that wonderful skill he had in miniaturizing emotions, in making small masterpieces out of big subjects. Sterne's Janatone, the landlord's daughter at Montreuil, is reported to have said of Mrs Piozzi's courier that "the tone makes the song."¹ To none is this adage more applicable than to Sterne.

Only in this regard does *Tristram Shandy* resemble the *Sentimental Journey* save towards its close, when it includes it. *Tristram* is a farrago—a gallimaufry—produced in annual instalments, and Sterne's particularity does not lend itself to lengthy treatment or sustained effort, which sometimes wearies and often bewilders. True, *Tristram* gave the world three master-characters, but length and disjointedness are its faults. The *Sentimental Journey*, on the other hand, is a succession of vignettes, and there his *métier* succeeds. In this *genre* all depends on the arrangement of the particles, whether they are subordinate to the whole, whether the microscope makes a picture. In *Tristram*, Toby, Trim, and Le Fevre afford a wine of generous vintage lacking to the *Journey*, which is half liqueur; and to liqueurs Sterne was actually addicted. This is what makes Taine, who could not understand Trim or Toby, regard Sterne as a dram, chiefly suitable for dark days and blue devils.

The compass of his range was narrow, but not the compass of his voice. That was multiple. It sang no *recitative*, it told no tale, but it implied and has inspired hundreds. Beyond the two or three great characters that Sterne created,—not through narrative but through impression, by their immanence in *us*,—he made no others; the society of his

¹ Cf the incident drawn from Mrs Piozzi's book of travel (1779), and introduced by Professor Cross in his *Life of Sterne*, p 365

day seems to have dried up that source. But he continued to improvise on life through his modern vehicle of feeling, and he grew more exquisite in the manner that renders themes by tone and accent. His fineness will best appear by comparison. Scott's Wandering Willie, the beloved vagabond of *Redgauntlet*, is a creature after Sterne's own heart, and he lives breezily and substantially (with an occasional whisper from the earlier wizard) in the Wizard's pages. But the transforming wand is different. Scott vivifies the vagrant by sheer force and vigour. Even in the vision of Willie's visit to the living dead, we realise that Scott relates (and prolongs) a superstition. With Sterne it would have been otherwise. The magic would have lain in the person, not in the story, and a few strokes would have sent the awe-struck fiddler wavering for ever in dreamland. It is the difference between etching and line engraving, between the oblique "oratio" and the direct. Even in the grotesquer traceries of *Tristram*, Sterne is an impressionist. As an impressionist above all, he must be considered, and perhaps impressionism includes the rest. The term has been glibly used by our own contemporaries. Let us analyse its meaning.

Impressionism, in whatever branch of art it occurs, is the method, or rather the spirit, of suggestion, as opposed to the method, or rather the substance, of description. Its appeal is associative. It is the scent that recalls the flower, the shell that re-echoes the wave, the lock of hair that brings back the vanished presence, the tone of the sentence that implies the motive for its delivery. It joins the sense to the form, it is at once pulse and thermometer. And if, for one moment, we retrace the origin of English literary impressionism, it consists, firstly in our noble version of the Bible, and secondly in the influence of music. The old Greek viewed nature from the outside; he described what

in the jargon of the schools is termed the "object," he described the "it." The ancient Hebrew, on the other hand, shadowed and bodied forth the subject, the "*I*," the inward life. Greece and Rome viewed man in his relation to externals; Judea, in his relation to himself. Compare for one instant Job's "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," with the "Suffering is learning" sentiment in Herodotus, Agamemnon, and the Symposium, and this difference is manifest. Or Pindar's "Man is a dream of a shadow" with "All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasted by": the addition defines the distinction. What pagan would have imaged death by "the silver cord being loosed and the golden bowl being broken, when the mourners go about the streets and man goeth to his long home"? These are the notes of sentimental impressionism. Whereas even the darkness covering the eyes of Homeric heroes, the "the shade of each of us feels pain" in Virgil, the "not all of me shall die" in Horace, fail to strike or stir acute feeling. Again, contrast "the sea's countless dimple" of Æschylus with Job's "when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy." The one expresses plastic art, the other resembles music, and the essence of music is its subjectivity. The Old and the New Testaments alike are full of a sense of the infinite environing the individual, while the main emphasis of classical accent is finality—Catullus is perhaps an exception. The personal and the plaintive hold the voice and quality of impressionism. It is just these, and not his acquaintance with the mythology of Lemprière, that makes Keats an impressionist; just these, and not his whimsical vagaries, that cause us so to consider Sterne. Impressionist writing is a department of romantic and sentimental literature eminently fit for lyrical poetry, or for such prose as lends itself to glimpses of

life or nature through awakened memories But it is not confined to lyrical poetry. "Here I and sorrow sit," for example, strikes an intenser note of desolation than pages of description "I kissed thee ere I killed thee" flashes before us Othello's whole nature, so does Shylock's "I had it of Leah, when I was a bachelor, I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys" So does Gretchen's

"Doch alles, was mich dazu trieb,
Gott, war so gut! ach, war so lieb!"

All these are windows into the soul They are lyrical epigrams Such a treatment is only truthful, and therefore valuable, when the incompleteness of its statement is counterbalanced by the completeness of its suggestion We should never allow ourselves to believe that impressionism is any royal road to imaginative art, or admirable as an end in itself Some moderns hold otherwise For them impressionism often means the obscuration of an idea by fog instead of the indication of it by lights and shadows There is an anecdote which may dispose of this fallacy An impressionist artist once proudly showed his masterpiece to a friend "What a beautiful sunset!" was the response "Sunset!" exclaimed the indignant genius, "sunset! Why, it is a portrait of your uncle"

Music and the Bible, then, founded impressionism Now it is precisely these two currents that most influenced Sterne He told young Suard that the Bible, which he read daily, had shaped his style, would that it had shaped his life! And he was as passionately fond of music as he was of painting Music, indeed, was the bond which afterwards riveted him to Gainsborough, and he constantly interweaves its terms into his pages If a signal instance be wanted of Sterne penetrated by Scripture, we have only to take his now

hackneyed "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," which he thrice used before he brought it into the *Sentimental Journey*. The spell of music controls all of his best ; it is the secret of that assonance which conveys the sense through the sound. These considerations are more distinctive of Sterne than the mere sentimentality on the surface, which displays him as always feeling pulses and increasing tears. Still more do they transcend that nasty nicety which prevented the speedy recognition of his genius, and which still hampers its free play.

Sterne's bent was neither epic nor reflective. Prose lyrics were his province. He was a romantic impressionist. The French rightly distinguish between "romanesque" (the fancifully outlandish) and "romantique." Much in Sterne is "romanesque," but more is "romantique." There is air in his very sickness, and a scent of the open even about his artifice. He can create as well as adorn, and the restlessness of nerves demanding an anodyne is itself capable of imparting composure. The feeling of fancy and the fancy of feeling form his groundwork.

And Sterne is not only a sentimental impressionist, but an ironist of the first order. Directly he has touched, if not our heart, at least our fibre, some whimsy confronts us that makes us wonder whether he meant to touch us at all. He steeps us in pathos till we seem gazing from above on grief, and then he whisks us down again to some quite common cranny of the ludicrous. This leads to a suspicion of insincerity ; but Sterne is perfectly sincere in the sense that he expresses himself. What he felt he wrote ; and he felt the irony of things, the small step from the sublime to the ridiculous. Heine does the same. And this characteristic is heightened by those tiny strokes of realistic colour by which he visualised his impressions. In both of these attributes he was unique in his time and country. The English

prose fiction of Sterne's generation has nothing to show like it, and his contemporaries were as much annoyed by the novelty as by the questionable parts. Their prudish Reverences, he wrote, would laugh at it in the bedchamber and abuse it in the parlour. It is nonsense to think that the reviews which trounced him were really purist, still less puritan. Grossness did not offend them, though Sterne's grossness did. To the pure such as these, all things are impure, and this is what Sterne meant by his comment (as the "Curate d'Estella") on his dubious fable of "Noses" —

"Chastity," he there wrote, "by nature the gentlest of all affections—give it but its head—'tis like a ramping and a roaring lion. The drift of the Curate d'Estella's argument was not understood—they ran the scent the wrong way—The world bridled his ass at the tail." "Even this operation," he adds, "would be misconstrued, —when the extremes of DELICACY, and the beginnings of CONCUISCENCE, hold their next provincial chapter together."

We have seen that "sensationalism" is a truer name for Sterne's manner than "sentimentality." Sensations were the plane in which he lived and moved and had his being. A single instance will show how rounded was that microcosm. In the second volume of *Tristram*, where he depicts the blush cast by the light of a fine May evening through the crimson curtains on the young shop-girl, and his own real blush that answered it, the scene, the light, the feeling, consciously combine — "There is a sort of pleasing, half-guilty blush, where the blood is more in fault than the man — 'tis sent impetuous from the heart, and virtue flies after it not to call it back, but to make the sensation of it more delicious to the nerves — 'tis associated — but I'll not describe it."

To doubt his colours would be to spoil them, and Sterne expressly demands acquiescence. "I would go fifty miles on foot," he says, "for I have not a horse worth riding on, to kiss the hand of that man whose generous heart will give up the reins of his imagination into his author's hands—be pleased, he knows not why, and cares not wherefore." And elsewhere he writes: "No author who understands the great boundaries of decorum and good breeding would presume to think all. The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably and leave him something to imagine in his turn as well as yours."

Such workmanship might be termed pictures without palettes. Everyone knows, if only from Thackeray's repetition of it, the famed passage in *Tristram Shandy* (though by right it belongs to the *Sentimental Journey*), which glows like a pastoral by Gainsborough, and perhaps best illustrates Sterne's artistry in word-painting. It can scarcely be repeated too often:—

"'Twas in the road 'twixt Nismes and Lunelle, where there is the best Muscatto wine in all France, and which, by the bye, belongs to the honest canons of Montpellier,—and foul befall the man who's drank it at their table but grudges them a drop of it. The sun was set—they had done their work; the nymphs had tied up their hair afresh, and the swains were preparing for a carouse. My mule made a dead point. 'Tis the fife and tabourin, said I.—I'm frighten'd to death, quoth he. . . . 'Tis very well, Sir, said I—I never will argue the point with one of your family as long as I live; so leaping off his back, and kicking off one boot into this ditch, and t'other into that—I'll take a dance, said I, so stay you here. A sun-burnt daughter of Labour rose up from the groupe to meet me as I advanced towards them. Her hair, which was a dark chesnut,

approaching rather to a black, was tied up in a knot, all but a single tress We want a cavalier, said she, holding out both her hands, as if to offer them And a cavalier ye shall have, said I, taking hold of both of them Hadst thou, Nannette, been array'd like a dutchesse !—But that cursed slit in thy petticoat ! Nannette cared not for it We could not have done without you, said she, letting go one hand, with self-taught politeness, leading me up with the other A lame youth, whom Apollo had recompenced with a pipe, and to which he had added a tabourin of his own accord, ran sweetly over the prelude as he sat upon the bank —Tie me up this tress instantly, said Nannette, putting a piece of string into my hand —It taught me to forget I was a stranger—The whole knot fell down —We had been seven years acquainted The youth struck the note upon the tabourin—his pipe followed, and off we bounded The sister of the youth who had stolen her voice from heaven, sang alternately with her brother—'Twas a Gascoigne roundelay,

‘Viva la Joia !

Fidon la Tristessa !’

The nymphs joined in unison, and their swains an octave below them—I would have given a crown to have it sew'd up—Nannette would not have given a sous *Viva la joia !* was in her lips—*Viva la joia !* was in her eyes A transient spark of amity shot across the space betwixt us—She look'd amiable !—Why could I not live and end my days thus ? Just disposer of our joys and sorrows, cried I, why could not a man sit down in the lap of content here—and dance, and sing, and say his prayers, and go to heaven with this nut brown maid ?”

What scene could be more delicious, or where is southern sunlight more immortal ? Even the petticoat slit does not mar the perfection of the landscape, the figure,

the style: the whole is steeped in atmosphere—the atmosphere of

“Youth, and bloom and this delightful world.”

What grace and *tournaire* in simple things and nature's toilet! What a fine example of the power to make a new birth of every moment! This wayside idyll has been illustrated by none so well as Stothart, who is perhaps the best interpreter of Sterne. It comes from one of the last three volumes of *Tristram*, which contain so much that is charming of Uncle Toby and of the *Shandy* prelude to the *Sentimental Journey*. These also supply the first encounter with the mad Maria, preferable to the second, though less familiar than the picture which Angelica Kaufmann popularised. It is a triumph of Sterne's pathos, as the dancing maid is a triumph of his joy:—

“They were the sweetest notes I ever heard; and I instantly let down the fore-glass to hear them more distinctly—‘Tis Maria,’ said the postillion, observing I was listening—‘Poor Maria,’ continued he (leaning his body to one side to let me see her, for he was in the line betwixt us), ‘is sitting upon the bank, playing her vespers upon her pipe, with her little goat beside her.’

“The young fellow uttered this with an accent and look so perfectly in tune to a feeling heart, that I instantly made a vow I would give him a four-and-twenty sous piece when I got to Moulins.

“‘And who is poor Maria?’ said I.

“‘The love and pity of all the villages around us,’ said the postillion. ‘Tis but three years ago that the sun did not shine upon so fair, so quick-witted and amiable a maid; and better fate did Maria deserve, than to have her banns forbid by the intrigues of the curate of the parish, who published them.’

"He was going on, when Maria, who had made a short pause, put the pipe to her mouth, and began the air again, they were the same notes—yet were ten times sweeter

"'It is the evening service of the Virgin,' said the young man,—'but who has taught her to play it, and how she came by her pipe, no one knows we think that Heaven has assisted her in both, for, ever since she has been unsettled in her mind, it seems her only consolation, she has never once had her pipe out of her hand, but plays that *service* upon it almost day and night' The postillion delivered this with so much discretion and natural eloquence that I could not help deciphering something in his face above his condition, and should have sifted out his history, had not poor Maria taken such full possession of me We had got up by this time almost to the bank where Maria was sitting she was in a thin white jacket, with her hair, all but two tresses, drawn up into a silk net, with a few olive leaves twisted a little fantastically on one side—she was beautiful, and if ever I felt the full force of an honest heartache, it was the moment I saw her —'God help her! poor damsel! Above a hundred masses' (said the postillion) 'have been said in the several parish churches and convents around for her,—but without effect, we have still hopes, as she is sensible for short intervals, that the Virgin at last will restore her to herself, but her parents, who know her best, are hopeless upon that score, and think her senses are lost for ever' As the postillion spoke this, Maria made a cadence so melancholy, so tender and querulous, that I sprang out of the chaise to help her, and found myself sitting betwixt her and her goat before I relapsed from my enthusiasm Maria looked wistfully for some time at me, and then at her goat—and then at me—and then at her goat again, and so on alternately "

Could any impression be more delicately rendered?

This half-witted, pensive girl, the evening service to the Virgin, "the air again—the same notes—yet ten times sweeter," the chirruping postillion, the man of sensibility in his post-chaise—all are felt with complete suddenness. What a subject for a painter! Yet what artist could match the author? Some will tell us that Sterne founded himself on his own Cervantes and Rabelais; but the flavour that makes his best defies all pedigree and analysis.

But the death-bed of the dying soldier, the elder Le Fevre, is his masterpiece;—the most pathetic scene that Sterne ever painted:—"There was a frankness in my Uncle Toby,—not the *effect* of familiarity, but the *cause* of it,—which let you at once into his soul and showed you the goodness of his nature. To this there was something in his looks and voice and manner superadded, which eternally beckoned to the unfortunate to come and take shelter under him; so that before my Uncle Toby had half finished the kind offers he was making to the father, had the son insensibly pressed up close to his knees, and had taken hold of the breast of his coat, and was pulling it towards him. The blood and spirits of Le Fevre, which were waxing cold and slow within him, and were retreating to their last citadel, the heart—rallied back;—the film forsook his eyes for a moment;—he looked up wistfully in my Uncle Toby's face,—then cast a look upon his boy,—and that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken.—Nature instantly ebbed again,—the film returned to its place,—the pulse fluttered—stopped—went on—throbbed—stopped again—moved—stopped—Shall I go on? No."

How opposed this, to the descriptive manner! Not only do we hear the ticking of the heart gradually fainter, we share the suspense and sorrow. How fine that phrase of "beckoning to the unfortunate to come and take shelter under him"! The lights and shadows fall without our

knowing it We are sympathisers as well as spectators by the magic of the style And it is not merely in show specimens that the spell is exercised How honestly unaffected, too, is the tribute to Uncle Toby, in a piece unspoiled by any titillation of the heart-strings or jugglery with the feelings —“Here—but why here, rather than in any other part of my story ?—I am not able to tell —But here it is—my heart tells me to pay to thee, my dear Uncle Toby, once for all, the tribute I owe thy goodness —Here let me thrust my chair aside, and kneel down upon the ground, whilst I am pouring forth the warmest sentiment of love for thee, and veneration for the excellences of thy character, that ever virtue and nature kindled in a nephew’s bosom —Peace and comfort rest for evermore upon thy head ! Thou enviedst no man’s comforts,—insultedst no man’s opinions,—thou blackenedst no man’s character,—devouredst no man’s bread ! Gently, with faithful Trim behind thee, didst thou ramble round the little circle of thy pleasures, jostling no creature in thy way For each one’s sorrow thou hadst a tear, for each man’s need thou hadst a shilling Whilst I am worth one to pay a weeder,—thy path from thy door to thy bowling green shall never be grown up —Whilst there is a rood and a half of land in the Shandy family, thy fortifications, my dear Uncle Toby, shall never be demolished ”

To Le Fevre and Uncle Toby we must revert, but here, in considering Sterne’s word-colour and word-music, we should not omit the interpretation of a curtsy from the *Sentimental Journey* —“The young girl made me more an humble courtesy than a low one—’twas one of those quiet, thankful sinkings where the spirit bows itself down—the body does not more than tell it I never gave a girl a crown in my life which gave me half the pleasure ” Or its pendant, “The mortality of Trim’s hat,” the place where

the loyal servant imparts the sad news of young master Bobby's death. "'Are we not here now?'" continued the Corporal; 'and are we not'—(dropping his hat plump on the ground, and pausing before he pronounced the word)—'gone in a moment?' The descent of the hat was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it.—Nothing could have expressed the sentiment of mortality, of which it was the type and forerunner, like it—it fell dead—the Corporal's eye fixed upon it as upon a Corpse; and Susannah burst into a flood of tears."

And then take this from the part of *Tristram Shandy* where Sterne already surveys the delights of travel.—"With what felicity, continued I, clapping my two hands together, shall I fly down the rapid Rhone with the VIVARES on my right hand, and DAUPHINY on my left, scarce seeing the ancient cities of VIENNE, VALENCE and VIVIERES. What a flame will it rekindle in the lamp to snatch a blushing grape from the Hermitage and Côte roti, as I shoot by the foot of them! And what a fresh spring in the blood! To behold upon the banks advancing and retiring, the Castles of Romance, whence courteous knights have whilome rescued the distressed—and see vertiginous, the rocks, the mountains, the cataracts, and all the hurry which Nature is in with all her great works about her." The last sentence gives more than tints: it pictures thought.

A further specimen of Sterne's faculty will add his humour. The Shandys are at Auxerres; they repair to the Abbey of St German to see the bodies "of which Monsieur Sequier has given such a recommendation." "I'll go to see anybody, quoth my Uncle Toby; for he was all compliance through every step of the journey.—Defend me! said my father, they are all mummies.—Then one need not shave, quoth my Uncle Toby. Shave! No—cried my father—'twill be more like relations to go with our beards." The

sacristan, a young Benedictine, shows the way They visit the graves of saints and heroes, and at last,—“This tomb, said the young Benedictine, looking downwards, contains the bones of ST MAXIMA who came from Ravenna on purpose to touch—the body of ST MAXIMUS, said my father, putting in his saint before him They were two of the greatest saints of the whole Martyrology, added my father Excuse me, said the Sacristan,—’twas to touch the bones of ST GERMAIN the builder of the Abbey —And what did she get by it ? said my Uncle Toby —What does any woman get by it ? said my father —MARTYRDOM, replied the young Benedictine, making a bow down to the ground, and uttering the word with so humble yet decisive a cadence, it disarmed my father for a moment ’Tis supposed, continued the Benedictine, that ST MAXIMA has lain in this tomb four hundred years, and two hundred before her canonization—’tis but a slow rise, Brother Toby, quoth my father, in this selfsame army of Martyrs —A desperate slow one, an’ please your Honour, said Trim, unless one could purchase—I should rather sell out entirely, quoth my Uncle Toby —I am pretty much of your opinion, Brother Toby, said my father —Poor ST MAXIMA ! said my uncle Toby low to himself, as we turned from her tomb She was one of the fairest and most beautiful ladies either of Italy or France, continued the sacristan —But who the duce has got lain down here, beside her, quoth my father, pointing with his cane to a large tomb as we walked on —It is *St Optat*, Sir, answered the sacristan —And properly is *St Optat* placed ! said my father And what is *St Optat*’s story ? continued he —*St Optat*, replied the sacristan, was a bishop —I thought so by Heaven ! cried my father, interrupting him—*St Optat* —How should *St Optat* fail ? So snatching out his pocket-book, and the young Benedictine holding him the torch as he wrote, he set it down as a new prop to his system of

Christian names, and I will be bold to say so disinterested was he in the search after truth that had he found a treasure in St Optat's tomb, it would not have made him half so rich : 'Twas as successful a short visit as ever was paid to the dead."

Though Sterne's manner sometimes declines on mannerism, it is not precious or mediocre. The artist picturesques attitude with unique grace and concentration. When Mrs Shandy listens at her husband's door "with all her powers," "laying the edge of her finger across her two lips—holding in her breath and bending her head a little downwards, with a twist of her neck (not towards the door, but from it, by which means her ear was brought to the chink)," Sterne writes that "the listening slave with the Gates of Silence at his back could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio." And when Captain Shandy falls asleep, pondering on his mock campaigns, and "the magic left the mind the weaker," "STILLNESS, with SILENCE at her back, entered the solitary parlour and drew their gauzy mantle over my Uncle Toby's head, and LISTLESSNESS, with queer lax fibre and undirected eye, sat quietly down beside him in his arm chair. . . . Softer visions, gentler vibrations stole sweetly in upon his slumbers,—the trumpet of war fell out of his hands—he took up the lute, sweet instrument ! of all others the most delicate ! The most difficult ! How wilt thou touch it, my dear Uncle *Toby* ?" Sterne's touch is happiest in lutes and Lydian measures.

The tiny strokes in the first of these passages demand a few examples of his ideal realism. *Tristram Shandy*, a "rhapsodical" work, as Sterne called it, on which he said the "sunshine" of his digressions played, is full of such artistic minuteness. Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, Mr and Mrs Shandy, cannot walk in or out, sit up or down, laugh or weep, without living in the small symbols of their move-

ments Sterne has explained why he used a method so preposterous for his time, so congenial to ours. He loved to transfigure and interpret the obvious. When old Shandy, overwhelmed by the blow of the son's mischristening, reflects on the fatality of wrong names and tells us that a man may be "Nicodemused" into nothing, the peculiarity of his exit is thus accounted for—"Nature in all *provoking cases* determines us to a sally of this or that member—or else she thrusts us into this or that place, or posture of body, we know not why—but mark, Madam, we live amongst riddles and mysteries—the most obvious things which come in our way have dark sides which the clearest sight cannot penetrate into and even the clearest and most exalted understandings amongst us find ourselves puzzled and at a loss in almost every cranny of nature's works, so that this, like a thousand other things, falls out for us in a way, which though we cannot reason upon it,—yet we find the *good* of it, may it please your Reverences and your Worships—and that's enough for us. Now, my father could not lie down with this affliction for his life nor could he carry it upstairs like the other—he walked composedly out with it to the fishpond. Had my father leant his head upon his hand, and reasoned an hour which way to have gone—Reason, with all her force, could not have directed him to anything like it. There is something, Sir, in fishponds—but what it is I leave to system builders and fishpond diggers betwixt 'em to find out—but there is something in the first disorderly transport of the humours, so unaccountably becoming in an orderly and a straight walk towards one of them, that I have often wondered that neither *Pythagoras*, nor *Plato*, nor *Solon*, nor *Lycurgus*, nor *Mahomet*, nor any of your noted law-givers, ever gave orders about 'em." This miniature process fits the whole of the *Sentimental Journey*, which deals with the small amenities of life, and paints them in pastel.

Nowhere is Sterne's "grand curiosity" on little lines displayed better than in his outline of the begging philosopher whom he watched from the lattice of his hotel :— "It was a tall figure of a philosophic, serious, adust look which passed and repassed sedately along the street, making a turn of about sixty paces on each side of the gate of the Hotel. The man was about fifty-two, had a small cane under his arm, was dressed in a dark drab-coloured coat, waistcoat, and breeches, which seemed to have seen some years' service. They were still clean, and there was a little air of frugal *propreté* throughout him. By his pulling off his hat and his attitude of accosting a good many in his way I saw he was asking charity, so I got a sous or two out of my pocket ready to give him as he took me in his turn. He passed by me without asking anything, and yet he did not go five steps further before he asked charity of a little woman—I was much more likely to have given of the two—he had scarce done with the woman when he pulled off his hat to another who was coming the same way. An ancient gentleman came slowly and after him a young smart one, he let them both pass and asked nothing. I stood observing him half an hour in which time he had made a dozen turns backwards and forwards and found that he invariably pursued the same plan." Something "singular" there was in this problem which kept Sterne awake all night. His whimsicality is always analysing the singular, even in candle-light.¹ Every dwarf and loafer in the crowd attracts him, and it will be remembered that when he gave alms as he left the inn he said that to be called "my lord *Anglais*" was worth the money. But in this case he had not long to wait before his perplexity ended, as he espied the same man begging from two "vestal sisters" in the dark back alley of Paris. Sterne was certainly not one like his "Mundungus,"

¹ In the foreign travels of *Tristram* occurs a whimsy on the Paris candles

who "travell'd straight on looking neither to his right hand or his left, lest Love or Pity should seduce him out of his road" —

"There is a long dark passage issuing out from the Opera Comique into a narrow street, 'tis trod by a few who humbly wait for a *fiacre*, or wish to get off quietly o'foot when the opera is done. At the end of it, towards the theatre, 'tis lighted by a small candle, the light of which is almost lost before you get half-way down but near the door—'tis more for ornament than use—you see it as a fixed star of the least magnitude, it burns—but 'tis little good to the world, that we know of. In returning along this passage, I discerned, as I approached within five or six paces of the door, two ladies standing arm in arm, with their backs against the wall, waiting, as I imagined, for a *fiacre*—as they were next the door, I thought they had a prior right, so edged myself up about a yard, or little more, of them, and quietly took my stand. I was in black, and scarce seen. The lady next me was a tall lean figure of a woman, of about thirty-six, the other of the same size and make, of about forty, there was no mark of wife or widow in any one part of either of them—they seemed to be two upright vestal sisters, unsapped by caresses, unbroke in upon by tender salutations. I could have wished to have made them happy—their happiness 'was destined that night to come from another quarter. A low voice with a good turn of expression, and sweet cadence at the end of it, begged for a twelve-sous piece betwixt them, for the love of Heaven. I thought it singular that a beggar should fix the quota of an alms—and that the sum should be twelve times as much as what is usually given in the dark. They both seemed astonished at it as much as myself—Twelve sous! said one—A twelve-sous piece! said the other—and made no reply. The poor man said he knew not how to ask less of ladies of their rank, and bowed down

his head to the ground. Poo! said they—we have no money. The beggar remained silent for a moment or two, and renewed his application. Do not, my fair young ladies, said he, stop your good ears against me.—Upon my word, honest man! said the younger, we have no change.—Then God bless you, said the poor man, and multiply those joys which you can give to others without change! I observed the elder sister put her hand into her pocket.—I'll see, said she, if I have a sous. A sous! give twelve, said the suppliant; Nature has been bountiful to you, be bountiful to a poor man. I would, friend, with all my heart, said the younger, if I had it. My fair charitable! said he, addressing himself to the elder—What is it but your goodness and humanity that makes your pretty eyes so sweet that they outshine the morning even in this dark passage? And what was it which made the Marquis de Santerre and his brother say so much of you both as they just passed by? The two ladies seemed much affected; and impulsively at the same time they both put their hands into their pockets, and each took out a twelve-sous piece. The contest betwixt them and the poor suppliant was no more—it was continued betwixt themselves, which of the two should give the twelve-sous piece in charity, and to end the dispute, they both gave it together, and the man went away. I stepped hastily after him: it was the very man whose success in asking charity of the women before the door of the Hotel had so puzzled me—and I found at once his secret, or at least the basis of it—it was flattery, delicious essence! How refreshing art thou to Nature! How sweetly dost thou mix with the blood and help it through the most difficult and tortuous passages to the heart! The poor man as he was not straitened for time, had given it here in a larger dose: and 'tis certain he had a way of bringing it into less form, for the many sudden

cases he had to do with in the streets, but how he contrived to correct, sweeten, concentrate and qualify each—I vex not my spirit with the inquiry—It is enough the beggar gained two twelve-sous pieces—and they can best tell the rest, who have gained much greater matters by it ”

This is one of the most original passages in all Sterne—at once realistic and impressionist. It is small, it is big, it is inconclusive, and yet it is definite. It has many of the qualities which endear the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, and there are two further passages proving that, though Sterne harped on one string, he could do so in many keys. The first is a pathetic portrait of the broken-down Chevalier de St Louis, who stood in the streets of Versailles selling patties, with the cross set in gold and with its red ribbon tied to his button-hole, the other is the weird fragment of the Notary and his wife. The first might be a piece out of the *New Arabian Nights*, the other is a forebear of *Markheim*.

“He was begirt with a clean linen apron which fell below his knees, and with a sort of bib half-way up to his breast. Upon the top of this, but a little below the hem, hung his *croix*. His basket of little *pâtés* was cover’d with a white damask napkin, another of the same kind was spread at the bottom, and there was a look of *propreté* and neatness throughout that one might have bought his *pâtés* from him as much from appetite as from sentiment. He told me, in a few words, that the best part of his life had pass’d in the service, in which, after spending a small patrimony, he had obtain’d a company and the *croix* with it, but at the conclusion of the last peace, his regiment, being reformed, and the whole corps, with those of some other regiments, left without any provision, he found himself in a wide world without friends, without a livre—and indeed, said he, without anything but this—pointing, as he said it, to his *croix* ” This is not the

sole place where Sterne treats of those broken-down gentlemen who specially appealed to him.

But the notary interlude is as uncanny as this is sweet and melting. It opens with a sort of back-glance at Mrs Sterne, and though it is connected with mediæval romance, the form and feeling are Sterne's entirely. Observe how directly he enters into the heart of the story :—

“——Now as the notary's wife disputed the point with the notary with too much heat—I wish, said the notary (throwing down the parchment) that there was another notary here only to set down and attest all this.

“——And what would you do then, Monsieur ? said she, rising hastily up.—The notary's wife was a little fume of a woman, and the notary thought it well to avoid a hurricane by a mild reply.—I would go, answered he, to bed.—You may go to the devil, answered the notary's wife.

“Now there happening to be but one bed in the house, the other two rooms being unfurnished, as is the custom at Paris, the notary went forth with his hat and cane and short cloak, the night being very windy, and walked out ill at ease towards the *Pont Neuf*. Of all the bridges which ever were built, the whole world who have passed over the *Pont Neuf* must own, that it is the noblest—the finest—the grandest—the lightest—the longest—the broadest, that ever conjoined land and land together upon the face of the terraqueous globe.—*By this it seems as if the Author of the fragment had not been a Frenchman.* The first fault which divines and the doctors of the Sorbonne can allege against it, is, that if there is a capful of wind in or about Paris, 'tis more blasphemously *sacre-Dieu'd* there than in any other aperture of the whole city—and with reason, good and cogent Messieurs ; for it comes against you without crying *garde d'eau*, and with such unpremeditable

puffs, that of the few who cross it with their hats on not one in fifty but hazard two livres and a half, which is its full worth. The poor notary, just as he was passing by the sentry, instinctively clapp'd his cane to the side of it, but in raising it up, the point of his cane catching hold of the loop of the sentinel's hat, hoisted it over the spikes of the ballustrade, clear into the Seine — 'Tis an *ill wind*, said a boatman, who caught it, *which blows nobody any good*. The sentry being a gascon, incontinently twirl'd up his whiskers, and levell'd his harquebuss. Harquebusses in those days went off with matches, and an old woman's paper lantern at the end of the bridge happening to be blown out, she had borrow'd the sentry's match to light it—it gave a moment's time for the gascon's blood to run cool, and turn the accident better to his advantage — 'Tis an *ill wind*, said he, grasping the notary's castor and legitimating the capture with the boatman's adage. Luckless man that I am! said the notary, to be the sport of hurricanes all my days—to be born to have the storm of ill language levelled against me and my profession wherever I go—to be forced into marriage by the thunder of the Church to a tempest of a woman—to be driven forth out of my house by domestic winds, and despoiled of my castor by pontific ones—to be here, bare-headed, in a windy night at the mercy of the ebbs and flows of accident.—Where am I to lay my head? miserable man! what wind in the two-and-thirty points of the whole compass can blow unto thee, as it does to the rest of thy fellow creatures, good! As the notary was passing on by a dark passage, complaining in this sort, a voice call'd out to a girl to bid her run for the next notary — now the notary being the next, and availing himself of his situation, walk'd up the passage to the door, and passing through an old sort of a saloon, was usher'd into a large chamber dismantled of everything but a long military pike

—a breast plate—a rusty old sword, and bandoleer, hung up equidistant in four different places against the wall. An old personage who had heretofore been a gentleman, and, unless decay of fortune taints the blood along with it, was a gentleman at that time, lay supporting his head upon his hand in his bed ; a little table with a taper burning was set close beside it, and close by the table was placed a chair—the notary sat him down in it ; and pulling out his ink-horn and a sheet or two of paper which he had in his pocket, he placed them before him, and dipping his pen in his ink, and leaning his breast over the table, he disposed everything to make the gentleman's last will and testament. Alas ! Monsieur le Notaire, said the gentleman, raising himself up a little, I have nothing to bequeath which will pay the expence of bequeathing, except the history of myself which I should not die in peace unless I left it as a legacy to the world ; the profits arising out of it I bequeath to you for the pains of taking it from me—it is a story so uncommon it must be read by all mankind—it will make the fortunes of your house.—The notary dipp'd his pen into his ink-horn.—Almighty director of every event in my life ! said the old gentleman, looking up earnestly and raising his hands towards heaven—thou whose hand has led me on through such a labyrinth of strange passages down into this scene of desolation, assist the decaying memory of an old, infirm, and broken-hearted man—direct my tongue by the spirit of thy eternal truth, that this stranger may set down naught but what is written in that Book, from whose records, said he, clasping his hands together, I am to be condemn'd or acquitted !—the notary held up the point of his pen betwixt the taper and his eye. . . . And where is the rest of it, La Fleur ? said I, as he just then enter'd the room."

These and their like convince more than the stock

beauties of the monk at Calais, or the twice-told whumpers over the dead ass by the wayside. They are poetical, and bear no trace of what Sterne calls the *Correggiosity of Correggio*. Something there is in them that takes us out of ourselves and the world—a snatch of the strain pervading the far greater Heine. Sterne, elsewhere in his Paris pictures, depicts the sad dwarf bullied by the German soldier on the theatre parterre. The word-catchers inform us that he took his hint from some old French author. Whence he took it matters not, it bears his signature and superscription. What does matter is that the joint effect of that episode and our last citation shows a real relationship to Heine's strange fragment about the strolling troupe that he met in London and re-met across the water. Heine has well said that in the great Morgue of literature the faces of the dead bear a mutual likeness which he who knows may recognise.

Sterne's affinities are clear, nor are they limited to these. There is his modern trick of employing refrains like that of "The Lady Baussière rode on," which Byron quoted with gusto. And there is a constant dramatisation of the style, peculiar to him in his age. When he talks of a post-chaise he addresses the postillions, and when he touches on the inconsequence of his manner he inserts a scene from those York races which he so often attended — "What a rate have I gone at, curveting and frisking it away, two up and two down for four volumes together, without looking once behind or even on one side of me to see whom I trod upon! So off I set as if the arch-Jockey of jockeys had got behind me. Now riding at this rate with what good intention and resolution you may,—'tis a million to one you'll do someone a mischief, if not yourself. He's flung—he's off—he's lost his seat—he's down—he'll break his neck—See! If he has not galloped full among the scaffolding of the undertaking criticks! He'll knock his

brains out against some of their posts—he's bounced out!—Look—he's now riding like a mad cap through a whole crowd of painters, fiddlers, poets, biographers, physicians, lawyers, logicians, players, schoolmen, churchmen, statesmen, soldiers, casuists, connoisseurs, prelates, popes, and engineers.—Don't fear, said I, I'll not hurt the poorest jackass upon the king's highway.—But your horse throws dirt; see, you've splashed a bishop.—I hope in God 'twas only Ernulphus, said I.—But you have squirted full in the faces of . . . doctors of the Sorbonne.—That was last year, replied I.—But you have trod this moment upon a king—kings have bad times on't, said I, to be trod on by such people as me.—You have done it, replied my accuser. I deny it, quoth I, and so have got off. And here am I standing with my bridle in one hand and with my cap in the other, to tell my story." Could Richardson, or Smollett, or Fielding have so introduced the turf?

Some of his literary moods elude precision; Sterne's wit and fun are not of the catching kind. And in all his best writing the sob is never far from the smile. That is his irony; and though he put forward *Tristram Shandy* to be laughed at, his power, as was justly remarked, was his pathos.¹ His humour, in his own phrase, which Sir Walter Scott and Mr Rudyard Kipling have repeated, is "another story." He himself has remarked on the close alliance between gaiety and "spleen." His crotchets are never sour, but they invite less to laughter than a smile. And sometimes they strike deep down into human nature. Few will forget the bit where Trim exclaims, brightening up his face, "Alack-o'-day, your honour knows I have neither wife nor child—I can have no sorrows in this world"; or that other where Uncle Toby tells his brother of his bequests for the comrade of his battles: "'I have left Trim

¹ Cf *The Monthly Review*, March 1768

my bowling-green,' said my Uncle Toby My father smiled
 'I have also left him a small pension' My father looked
 grave "

Sometimes he would emulate the conceits of Congreve, as where his lost manuscript reappears in the curl-papers of a tradesman's wife, and Sterne observes "All my remarks, in your head, Madam", we recall Mrs Millamant and her wish to be "pinned up in prose" And sometimes he could be caustic, as in the colloquy between Shandy and Obadiah about horses "The Devil's in that horse, then take PATRIOT, cried my father, and shut the door —PATRIOT is sold, said Obadiah" But through all his variations, one element reigns—an insouciance that sports with trouble, extracting the sweet from the bitter "Great Apollo," he exclaims, "if thou art in a good humour, give me, I ask no more, but one stroke of native humour with a single spark of thy own power along with it, and send Mercury with the rules and compasses, if he can be spared, with my compliments to —— no matter" The rules and compasses he scorned, and his was a pagan resignation—the "philosophy" of which Goethe approved How pagan he could be has been shown already in his tender apostrophe to Time It may be re-illustrated by another and more jocund passage "Blessed Jupiter," he exclaims, "and blessed every other heathen god and goddess, for now ye will all come into play again What Jovial times! But where am I? And into what a delicious riot of things am I rushing? I, I, who must be cut short in the midst of my days, and taste no more of 'em than what I borrowed from imagination, peace to thee, generous fool, and let me go on"

There is a divine impressionism and a profane Keats is such a divine impressionist, while Sterne, with his fits of staginess, cannot attain such heights It is not merely that Keats was an ethereal poet while Sterne hovers in the nether

air. Their force of flight is different : there is no ecstasy in Sterne. The contrast accentuates itself in the two exquisite lines which conclude the sonnet beginning, "To one who has been long in city pent" :—

"E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently."

This thought is not un-Sternian, and we may guess how much less celestially Sterne would have treated the last image in prose—an image whose airiness, though not its purity, he would have been certain to coquette with. In the Shandean plane it might be handled thus :—

"But I shall be buried first before I get to my chapter on Buttons ! 'It would never have happened' (quoth my Uncle Toby, drawing himself up ever so little) 'had it not been that the uniform was soiled.'—'By what ?' asked my father, laying down his pipe, as who should say, *something* must have wetted it. 'A pint of Tarragona, I'll wager by all that *skinful*,' guffawed Dr Slop.—'It must have been the rain,' said my mother.—'And faith, 'twas *a* rain,' sighed Trim.—'An't please your honour, tell them the story of the gipsy's tear.'—'Tell it thyself, Trim,' resumed my Uncle, 'for thou wast the cause of it.'—'He fisti-cuffed him ?' surmised my father ; 'Gipsies are vagabonds and doubtless the rascal deserved the blow !' ' 'Twas a wench,' continued my Uncle, 'whom Trim there saved from drowning.'—'The uniform ?' interrupted the doctor.—The honest fellow hung down his head and blushed at the recollection ; he never did a kind action, but I'll swear he blushed at the telling on't ; then, clearing his voice, he began—'I'm cursed if I let him tell it now—Someday perhaps, but *now* !' Surely, Madam, a button is worth more than a tear to you. After all, I protest, what is a tear ?—A slight moisture from the swelling of the lachrymal gland,

frequent expression than the others—would it showed oftener to the front! But his human originals are of their kind without parallel in comedy since Shakespeare. Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, the two Le Fevres, will never die, and to them some words must be devoted.

A bully, says Sterne, "though he may have fought fifty duels is a coward we all know that cowards have fought, nay—that cowards have conquered,—but a coward never performed a generous or noble action : and thou hast my authority to say that a hard-hearted character was never a brave one."¹ When Sterne wrote this he thought of Uncle Toby ; and Uncle Toby, I think, was Sterne's own father. The author writes with an affection that seems rooted in boyhood.

"My Uncle Toby," says Hazlitt, "is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. He is the most unoffending of God's creatures—or, as the French express it, *un tel petit bon homme*. Of his bowling-green, his sieges, and his amours, who would say or think anything amiss?" Sterne's real greatness lies in Uncle Toby ; for here he is out of himself, and here too he is quite dissociated from Rousseau, who never created anybody or anything outside his own temperament. Who he was (beyond the misattribution to Captain Hinde) we know not, though Sterne evidently did, and many of his other characters are ascertained. Smelfungus, of course, is Smollett, Mundungus is Dr Sharp. *What* Uncle Toby is all the world knows : a man human in every vein, simple, serious, an amusing grown-up child whose long experience of war taught him to love mankind more than glory or pleasure, and to find in the soldier's temper the greatest surety for peace ; loyal, brave, modest, affectionate, reverent, who "never spoke of the being and attributes of God but with hesitation" ;

¹ Cf *Original Letters* (1788), p 189

considerate for all, eager to protect the lives and fortunes of the *few* from the plunderings of the *many* —“Whenever that drum beats in our ears,” he says, “I trust, Corporal, we shall neither of us want so much humanity and fellow feeling as to face about and march” That Sterne loved him we may be sure Uncle Toby was his ideal of a man, and he abides his fairest handiwork

The bowling-green where he whistled “Lillibullero,” where he and Trim campaigned together, will its turf ever cease to flourish? —“Never did lover post down to a beloved mistress with more heat and expectation, than my Uncle Toby did to enjoy this self-same thing in private, —I say in private, for it was sheltered from the house, as I told you, by a tall yew hedge and was covered on the other three sides from mortal sight by rough holly and thickset flowering shrubs, —so that the idea of not being seen did not a little contribute to the idea of pleasure preconceived in my Uncle Toby’s mind —Vain thought! However thick it was planted about, or private soever it might seem, —to think, dear Uncle Toby, of enjoying a thing which took up a whole rood and a half of ground, —and not to have it known”

What he did there charms us in all the last volumes A glimpse is irresistible —“To one who took pleasure in the happy state of others, there could not have been a greater sight in the world, than, on a post morning in which a practicable breach had been made by the Duke of Marlborough in the main body of the place, to have sat behind the horn-beamed hedge, and observed the spirit with which my Uncle Toby, with Trim behind him, sallied forth, —the one with the gazette in his hand, the other with a spade to execute its contents —What an honest triumph in my Uncle Toby’s looks as he marched up to the ramparts, what intense pleasure in his eye as he stood over

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the Corporal reading the paragraph ten times over to him as he was at work, lest peradventure he should make the breach an inch too wide or leave it an inch too narrow.—But when the chamade was beat and the Corporal helped my uncle up it, and followed with the colours in his hand to fix them upon the ramparts—Heaven! Earth! Sea!—But what avail apostrophes?—With all your elements, wet or dry, ye never compounded so intoxicating a draught.”

And here stood the sham sentry-box where he first yielded to widow Wadman; and she appears to have been Lord Windsor's sister, whom Mrs Montagu encountered in the Bath Pump-Room.¹ What can surpass her sauciness as Uncle Toby peers into her eye:—“I protest, Madam, said my Uncle Toby, I can see nothing whatever in your eye.—It is not the white, said Mrs Wadman: my Uncle Toby looked with might and main into the pupil. Now of all the eyes that ever were created, from your own, Madam, up to those of Venus herself, there never was an eye of them all so fitted to rob my Uncle Toby of repose as the very eye which he was looking upon. It was not, Madam, a rolling eye, a romping or a wanton one, nor was it an eye sparkling, petulant, or imperious, all high gleams and terrifying executions, which would have curdled at once that milk of human nature of which my Uncle Toby was made up, but 'twas an eye full of gentle salutation and soft response, speaking, not like the trumpet stop of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to holds coarse conversation, but whispering soft like the last low accents of an expiring saint.—‘How can you live comfortless, Captain Shandy, and alone, without a bosom to lean your head upon or trust your cares to?’—It was an eye—but I shall be in love with it myself if I say another word about it.—It did my Uncle Toby's business.” A few steps on the

¹ Cf *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol 1 p 166

path beyond, and we reach the widow's parlour and Uncle Toby's proposal of marriage — "My Uncle Toby saluted Mrs Wadman after the manner in which women were saluted by men in the year of our Lord 1713 Then, facing about, he marched up abreast with her to the sofa, and in three plain words, though not before he was sat down, nor after he was sat down, but as he was sitting down, told her he was in love So that my Uncle Toby strained himself more in the declaration than was needed Mrs Wadman only looked down upon a slit she had been darning up in her apron upon expectation every moment that my Uncle Toby would go on, but having no talents for amplification, and love, moreover, of all others, being the subject of which he was the least the master, when he had told Mrs Wadman once that he loved her he let it alone, he left the matter to work off its own way " After discussing the elder Shandy's theory that talking of love is making it, Sterne completes the interview — "Mrs Wadman sat in expectation my Uncle Toby would do so, to almost the first pulsation of that minute wherein silence on one side or the other generally becomes indecent So drawing herself a little more towards him, and raising up her eye, sub-blushing as she did so, she took up the gauntlet, or the discourse, if you like it better, and communed with my Uncle Toby thus — 'The cares and disquietudes of the married state,' quoth Mrs Wadman, 'are very great'

" 'I suppose so,' said my Uncle

" 'And therefore, when a person,' continued Mrs Wadman, 'is so much at his ease as you are, so happy, Captain Shandy, in yourself, your friends and your amusements, I wonder what reasons can incline you to the state'

" 'They are written,' quoth my Uncle, 'in the Common Prayer-book' When my Uncle Toby had said this, he did not care to say it again, so casting his eye upon the

Bible which Mrs Wadman had laid upon the table, he took it up, and popping, dear soul, upon a passage in it of all others the most interesting to him, which was the siege of Jericho, he set himself to read it over, leaving his proposal of marriage, as he had done his declaration of love, to work in its own way." This last whimsy individualises the *tête-à-tête*.

And now it is but a step back again to Uncle Toby's own snuggerly, while he sits, one blustery evening, over supper. The landlord of the village inn enters to ask for a glass or two of sack "for a poor gentleman,—I think of the army," but so ill that the Boniface would almost steal it. Trim, Uncle Toby's henchman, is all attention when his master urges him to run after the landlord and inquire the name of the sick stranger. Boniface returns and talks of a son, "a boy of about eleven or twelve years of age;—but the poor creature has tasted almost as little as his father; he does nothing but mourn and lament for him night and day. He has not stirred from the bedside these two days." Thereupon Uncle Toby lays down his knife and fork and thrusts his plate from before him as Trim silently clears away. The compassionate captain ruminates over his pipe, and after a dozen whiffs or so, resolves to visit the sick-bed, despite the effects of a rainy night on the remains of the wound received at Namur. Trim dissuades him and goes himself, nor was it till his master had knocked the ashes out of his third pipe that the Corporal re-entered with his account. The servantless invalid had arrived with hired horses, on his way, it was thought, to his regiment. "‘Alas! the poor gentleman will never get from hence,’ said the landlady to me, ‘for I heard the death-watch all night long—and when he dies, the youth, his son, will certainly die with him, for he is broken-hearted already.’" The boy descends into the kitchen to order a thin toast:—

"I will do it for my father myself," said the youth. The kind soldier offers to save him that trouble. "Poor youth!" said my Uncle Toby, "he is being bred up from an infant in the army, and the name of a soldier, Trim, sounded in his ears like the name of a friend—I wish I had him here." Never, in his longest march, had the Corporal had so great a mind to dinner as he had to cry with him for company. "'What can be the matter with me, an' please your honour?'"—"Nothing in the world, *Trim*," said my Uncle Toby, blowing his nose, "but that thou art a good-hearted fellow." Mr Yorick's curate sat smoking in the kitchen, but he breathed not a word to comfort the youth. "'I thought it wrong,'" added the Corporal—"I think so too," said my Uncle Toby. And then comes the sequel, with its tender touches of Uncle Toby's visit, the proffer of his own house for the invalid, and the finale of Lieutenant Le Fevre's death. Its epilogue is, if possible, even more moving. The son grows up, tended and cherished by this good Samaritan. When he chooses his father's profession, Uncle Toby gives him a purse of gold and the father's sword, which, years gone by, he had hung up on a crook and pointed to as "all the fortune, my dear Le Fevre, which God has left thee", adding that "if he has given thee a heart to fight thy way with it in the world and thou doest it like a man of honour—'tis enough for us." And now, at their moment of parting, "my Uncle Toby took down the sword from the crook, where it had hung untouched ever since the Lieutenant's death, and delivered it to the Corporal to brighten up,—and having detained *Le Fevre* a single fortnight to equip him, and contract for his passage to *Leghorn*, he put the sword into his hand—If thou art brave, *Le Fevre*, said my Uncle Toby, this will not fail thee—But Fortune, said he (musing a little)—Fortune may—and if she does, added my Uncle Toby, embracing

him, come back again to me, *Le Fevre*, and we will shape thee another course. The greatest injury could not have oppressed the heart of *Le Fevre* more than my Uncle Toby's paternal kindness.—He parted from my Uncle Toby as the best of sons from the best of fathers.—Both dropped tears, and as my Uncle Toby gave him a last kiss, he slipped sixty guineas, tied up in an old purse of his father's, in which was his mother's ring, into his hand, and bade God bless him.” —The son fell ill at Leghorn : did he die ?

There is more of philosophic design in Sterne than most imagine, and Walter and Toby Shandy are meant to typify heart and head, the perversions of reason and the freaks of sensibility. The elder brother, a crabbed casuist, the “motive-monger” who knew his neighbour's motive for tears or laughter better than he knew it himself, feeds on argument ; the younger, collects the curiosities of fellow-feeling. Both of them are off the common track, inhabiting a quaint world of their own, for Sterne would never pursue the beaten road. But each relates himself to wider fields and a larger atmosphere. Real sorrow has no place in *Tristram Shandy* ; but the pin-pricks that take its place, and prostrate the father, are so disposed that the impression is the same. In this respect, if in no other, Jane Austen follows the same path as Sterne.

But a small space remains for Trim—his faithful worship, his manly tenderness ; his recollections of his brother's widow, of the Inquisition, which gained him his Montero cap, of his one romance—the fair Beguine with whom he would fain have divided the world in half ; his grave attitude when he taught his master how to “smoke” the citadel above the bowling-green ; his queer garden-encounter with Susannah and the curate ; his catechism, his sermon, his thoughts on death, and all his kitchen wisdom. How different is La Fleur, that other servant whom Sterne hired abroad, a

sportive monkey, as the other is a faithful dog Just as Trim gave Sterne occasion to advocate the slave and impeach *auto-da-fés*, so La Fleur enabled him to raise his voice for labour —“The sons and daughters of service part with Liberty, but not with Nature, in their contracts, they are flesh and blood, and have their little vanities and wishes in the midst of the house of bondage, as well as their task-masters—no doubt, they have set their self-denials at a price—and their expectations are so unreasonable, that I would often disappoint them, but that their condition puts this so much in my power to do it Behold! behold! I am thy *servant*—disarms me at once of the powers of a master —Thou shalt go, La Fleur! said I”

Even Sterne's gush over animals did more than flood handkerchiefs, though the Starling episode rings false, because, on Sterne's own showing, the bird only exchanged tyrants But his irksome though misused ass did contribute to humanity More than ten years later, Graves, author of the *Spiritual Quixote*, and indignant at cruelty to animals, wrote that he often thought of Sterne¹ Here sentimentality has helped the world

Human nature underlies Sterne's very distortions While Smollett and Fielding enveloped it in large, rough parcels, Sterne folded it in packets of tissue-paper which he tied with a silken thread, and this daintiness has hampered appreciation Without some counterbalance, indeed, it has grave drawbacks Sterne's counterbalance lay in the pathos of his humour and his power of reducing large outlines with effect But these do not always save him His predilection for small pieces (imaged by the duodecimos which held them) tended to make him fancy himself rich while he was poor, to resemble a man who should mistake

¹ Cf Hull's *Select Letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough, William Shenstone, etc.*, vol. II p. 184.

the petty cash into which he changes his gold for the gold itself. But the contrary method has its dangers also, and Sterne rightly reacted against those who, as he said, added so much to the *bulk*, so little to the *stock*. In these respects he is the Meissonier of fiction. His miniature manner is wholly responsible for De Maistre's attractive *Voyage autour de ma Chambre*, a sketch almost slavish in its adherence. And Saintine, who cannot boast the fineness or the finish, imbibes the spirit in his *Picciola*, which turns on a State-prisoner's sentimental attachment to a plant and the transference of that love to a gaoler's daughter who, at the risk of her life, begs Napoleon's permission to keep the languishing blossom in the cell. To pursue Sterne's influences on France would require a chapter.

No review of his works would be complete without some mention of his word-curiosities, chosen mostly perhaps for their sound. He speaks of "demi-pommados," "catachresis," and what-not like them. Nor are his names less peculiar. "Slawkenbergius" is an actual person, but what are we to say of "Mynheer Vanderbronderdondergewdenstronke"? His apostrophes, too, the "Sir" and "Madam," his "your Worships and Reverences," his "your High Mightinesses the world," are his own idioms. These last, Carlyle copied; but he borrowed more than these from one whom he praises in language lending some colour to consciousness of debt. Might not the following come straight out of *Sartor Resartus*?—"Heavens, thou art a strange creature, Slawkenbergius, what a whimsical view of the involutions of the heart of woman hast thou opened! How this can ever be translated, and yet if this specimen of Slawkenbergius and the exquisiteness of his moral should please the world—translated shall a couple of volumes be.—Else how this can ever be translated into good *English* I have no sort of conception,—seems in some passages to

want a sixth sense to do it rightly —What can he mean by the lambent pupilability of slow, low, dry chat, five notes below the natural tone,—which you know is little more than a whisper ?”

That Thackeray drew on Sterne is evident Jenny, Time, and the Lock of Hair speak for themselves, while Colonel Newcome's "Adsum" is Sterne all over The chapter on sleep, too, might well have been written by him — " 'Tis the refuge of the unfortunate—the enfranchisement of the prisoner—the downy lap of the hopeless, the weary and the broken-hearted, nor could I set out with a lie in my mouth by affirming that of all the soft and delicious functions of our nature by which the great Author of it in His bounty has been pleased to recompense the sufferings wherewith His justice and His good pleasures have wearied us,—that this is the chiefest (I know pleasure worth ten of it), or what a happiness it is to man, when the anxieties and passions of the day are over and he lays down upon his back, that his soul shall be so seated within him that which ever way she turns her eyes, the heavens shall look calm and sweet above her—no desire, or fear—or doubt that troubles the air, nor any difficulty past, present or to come, that the imagination may not pass over without offence, in that sweet secession ”

And the whole of Le Fevre inspired Thackeray The ring of its opening will suffice —“It was some time in the summer of that year in which *Dendermond* was taken by the Allies, which was about seven years before my father came into the country and about as many after the time that my Uncle Toby and Trim had privately decamped from my father's house in town, in order to lay some of the finest sieges to some of the finest fortified cities in Europe—that my Uncle Toby was one evening getting his supper with Trim sitting behind him at a small sideboard ” How far

this excels that prize conceit in Le Fevre about the ACCUSING SPIRIT "which flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath" and "blushed as it gave it in,"—while the RECORDING ANGEL, "as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever." What Garrick and Lady Spencer and half London called "sublime" seems now more like a courtier's compliment at some heavenly levee than a human tribute. It followed my Uncle Toby's "He shall not die, by God." That sentence is worth a thousand of the other : it comes straight from the heart, and convinces it. Placed where it is and as it stands, it is a noble line, worthy to establish a master's fame, and a fit memorial of his genius.

[Smollett] who never kept his temper, for we kept ours, and laughed whilst we scolded. The French can give themselves ease by swearing. English women do not know how to set about it, yet as Archbishops in France swear as well as their neighbours, I cannot see why women should not. The French women do it *sans façon*—scratch out the word and put an English one.”¹

Thomas Morton, who invented the character of “Mrs Grundy” in his play of *Speed the Plough*, was yet unborn, nor as yet was the crone so unbearable as hereafter. On her censorship, however, Sterne now turned his back; though he was often ready to flatter her to her face and to maintain that everything depends on the point of view.² Abroad, Mrs Grundy was a cipher, and perhaps Sterne missed her stimulating presence.

Yorick’s travel-pictures form his best itinerary; he leads off with the Channel passage:—

“Pray, Captain, quoth I, as I was going down into the cabin, is a man never overtaken by Death in this passage?—Why there’s not time for a man to be sick in it, replied he.—What a cursed liar! for I am sick as a horse, quoth I, already.—What a brain! Upside down! Hey-day! The cells broke loose one into another and the blood, and the lymph, and the nervous juices, with the fixed and volatile salts, are all jumbled into one mass! . . . Everything turns round in it like a thousand whirlpools.—I had give a shilling to know if I shant write the clearer for it. Sick! Sick! Sick!—When shall we get to land, Captain?

¹ Cf Add MSS 30,877, ff 70-78, Lydia Sterne to Wilkes, Angoulême, 22nd July 1769

² “The etiquette of this town,” he was to assure his Eliza, “(you’ll say) says otherwise—No matter! Delicacy and Propriety do not always consist in -observing her frigid doctrines” Cf *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775), p 28

—They have hearts like stones —Oh, I am deadly sick !— Reach me that thing, boy —’Tis the most discomfoting sickness—I wish I was at the bottom ! Madam, how is it with you ?—Undone ! undone ! undone !—Oh ! undone ! So —What ! The first time ?—No , ’tis the second, third, sixth, tenth time, Sir

“——BOULOGNE !—hah ! So we are all got together,— Debtors and sinners before heaven , A jolly set of us ,— but I can’t stay and quaff it off with you, I am pursued myself like a hundred Devils and shall be overtaken before I can well change horses —For heaven’s sake, make haste ”

How he ironises the scene !—“ *Ah ! ma chere fille !* said I, as she tripped by from her matin,—you look as rosy as the morning (for the sun was rising, and it made the compliment the more gracious)—No , it can’t be that, quoth a fourth—(She made a court’sy to me,—I kissed my hand)— ’Tis debt, continued he—’Tis certainly debt, quoth a fifth —I would not pay that gentleman’s debts, quoth Ace, for a thousand pounds But I have no debt but the debt of nature , and I want but patience of her, and I will pay her every farthing I owe her —How can you be so hard-hearted, Madam, to arrest a poor traveller going along, without molestation to anyone upon his lawful occasions ? Do stop that death-looking long-striding scoundrel of a scare-sinner, which is posting after me —He never would have followed me but for you—If it be but for a stage or two, just to give me start of him, I beseech you, Madam ”

With fresh flippancies the man of feeling beguiled his way till he stopped to notice the innkeeper’s daughter at Montreuil —

“She has been eighteen months at Amiens, and six at Paris, in going through her courses , so she knits and sews

and dances and does the little coquetties very well." He watches her work. It is a white thread-stocking. She "has let fall a least a dozen loop." . . . "Yes, ye, and so you, cunning gipsy—'tis long and taper, you see I need not stoop to your knee,—and that 'tis your own,—and that you've stiched it." And then the pale man in black bowed out his sleek black head:—
 ". . . As Janatone, withal (for that is her name) 'tis a fine so well for a drawing,—May I never draw more; or rather, may I draw like a draught horse by man's strength all the days of my life, if I do not draw her with all her proportions and with as determined a pencil as if I had her in the wattlest drapery. But your Worships choose rather that I give you the length, breadth, and perpendicular height of the great parish church, or a drawing of the façade of the Abbey of St. Antidre, which has been transported from Artois hither:—Everything is just, I suppose, as the masons and carpenter left them; . . . So, your Worships, and Reverences may all measure them at your leisure; but he who measures that, Janatone,—must do it now. Thou carriest the principle of change within thy frame; and considering the chance of a transitory life, I would not answer for thee a moment: Ere twice twelve months are passed and gone, . . . thou mayest go off like a flower and lose thy beauty;—Nay, thou mayest go off like a hussy and lose thyself. . . . So you must e'en be content with the original, which, if the evening be fine, in passing thro' Montreuil, you will see at your chaise door, as you change horses."

The froth of feeling! Maybe; but what a touch in the whipping of it! Where Fielding or Smollett would serve up a beef-steak, Sterne makes a French omelette of these eggs of sentiment. And the bitter herbs of his malady enter, half-seen, into the compound.

At length Paris is in sight, looking better, he ponders, than it smells. Through the streets he rattles to his hotel

in the Faubourg St Germain, and, in passing, he translates the legend on the Louvre—

“Earth no such folks !—no Folks e’er such a town
As Paris is !—sing derry, derry, down ”¹

It was a year of manifold French wonders—that of Rousseau’s *Emile* and *Social Contract*, of downcast Jesuits and uppish Opéra Comique, of the long preliminaries to the Peace of Paris. The orchestra that was to play the demonstration of the distant Revolution tuned up already. Its preludes were not yet the roar of a strident mob, but the soft, decadent note of a sapped society. And their master flutists were a strange crew—perverts from Calvin with perverts from Loyola, fanatics and *flâneurs*, the feelers who reasoned, and the rationalists who felt. Such were the builders of that huge *Encyclopædia* which Diderot founded—the Diderot who had now quarrelled with Rousseau. Madame d’Epinay played muse to the movement, Baron d’Holbach, a refined materialist, acted as its Mæcenas, while Grimm, another German adventurer, added scepticism even to theirs. For they believed in nothing but “man,” and for man they invented a false nature which answered only to theories and emotions. This was the vogue patronised by patricians like Bissy and Choiseul, and argued by casuists like the Abbé Tollot, Hall-Stevenson’s friend, or the unfrocked Abbé Raynal whose book was the last to be burned by a hangman. Voltaire held away and aloof, though he had sounded the strain of humanity in his poem on the Lisbon earthquake. Diderot was now the leader, but Diderot was didactic, which Sterne certainly was not. Sterne’s influence on Diderot

¹ Non orbis gentem, non urbem gens habet ullam
ulla parem.

appears in *Jacques le Fataliste*, a book published long after Sterne had vanished from the scene.

Into this circle, letters from the Goliath, Pitt, and Garrick, the David, admitted him. It seems odd that he never mentions Rousseau, now estranged from the set but their constant whipping-stock. Odd, too, that he never visited him at Mont St Louis; for, but a month after Rousseau's flight to Yverdun, Sterne did hire a chaise and horse to drive the same distance, and on a very Rousseau-like occasion:—"Before I got half way, the poor animal dropped down dead;—so I was forced to appear before the Police, and began to state my story in French, which was, that the poor beast had to do with a worse beast than himself, namely, his *master*, who had driven him all the day before (Jehu-like),—and that he had neither had corn nor hay; therefore I was not to pay for the horse:—But I might as well have whistled as to have spoke French; and I believe my Latin was equal to my Uncle Toby's Lillibullero,—being not understood because of its purity; but by dint of words, I forced my judge to do me justice:—no common thing by the way in France." One could have wished a meeting between the two sentimentalists, though it is pretty certain that Rousseau would soon have suspected Sterne. And there was this marked difference between them—Rousseau's feeling, such as it was, took effect in action; Sterne's actions, such as they were, took effect in feeling.

Sterne's bad French is the more curious because he soon boarded with a Parisian family to learn the language. At first he moved in the English colony—mostly Jacobites like his old associate, Trotter, and his new one, Shippen. There were tourists, too, of distinction: Macartney (whom Sterne knew) bear-leading Stephen Fox, whom (and his great brother) Lord Holland trained on Chesterfieldian

precepts With them the humourist visited Versailles, and it may have struck him that Parisian manners were not the best school for English morals, and that a boy in his teens might live the better for not seeing life

Yorick and the big-wigs were soon acquainted There was the Duc de Biron, Marshal of France, who talked to him about the "English ladies," and the financier La Poplinière, who talked to him of the "English taxes" But he was more absorbed in the group of d'Holbach, where his wit and oddities recommended him He jested, he says, "at his own expense", and this is true in more senses than one In his elation he looked on life as a boy does at a prism of soap-bubbles The convalescent threw his calling to the winds, and halved his time between beauty and badinage Garrick had introduced him to Titon, a connoisseur of the coulisses Sterne haunted the theatres, where he saw the "great Clairon" (who invited him to her suppers), Préville ("Mercury himself"), and the bewitching Dumesnil Diderot wrote plays, and Sterne sent Garrick a translation of his *Natural Son*, the weeping comedy which he called tragic Needless to say, a lady had Englished it With Sterne it was always a lady, what he would have done without them baffles comprehension Among the French, besides the d'Épinay and, perhaps, the Geoffrin, his letters record a Madame Morellet, while his *Sentimental Journey* has post-dated Madame de Vence, the doubter whom he nigh converted to his queer orthodoxy—"There are three epochas," he writes, "in the empire of a French woman—she is coquette, then deist, then *dévôte* The empire during these is never lost—she only changes her subjects Madame de V was vibrating between the first of these epochas, the colour of the rose was fading fast away—she ought to have been a deist five years before I had the honour to pay my first visit" Conversing on the sofa, Sterne told her

that there was no more dangerous thing in the world than for a beauty to be a deist. "We are not adamant," said I, taking hold of her hand—and there is need of all restraints till age in her own time steals in and lays them on us—but, my dear lady, said I, kissing her hand, 'tis too,—too soon—I declare I had the credit all over Paris of unpervverting Madame de V.—She affirmed that in one half hour I had said more for revealed religion than all the encyclopædias had said against it. I was listed directly into Madame de V.'s *Coterie*—and she put off the epocha of deism for two years." His work had heralded his visit, and the Comte de Bissy was immersed in *Tristram*. Sterne, refreshed by the buoyant air, could not resist an *encore* of his London gaieties. Once more he was booked a fortnight ahead. "For three weeks together," he tells us in retrospect, "I was of every man's opinion I met. *Pardi ! Ce Mons. Yorick a autant d'esprit que nous autres—Il raisonne bien*, said another.—*C'est un bon enfant*, said a third, and at this price I could have eaten and drunk and been merry all the days of my life at Paris."

Yorick's *esprit* was quite French, and so were his compliments. The *savants* received books from England ; for the *salonistes* he doubtless procured trinkets. Nor was his "dear, dear Jenny" forgotten, if we may trust the questionable mention of her when he describes Lyons in *Tristram*. In his turn, he accepted gifts : a snuff-box set in garnets, and a portrait shortly to be noticed, both of which, in the best of humours, he despatched to his wife. Success comes, he said, not by services but by being served ; "you put a dry twig in the ground, and water it because you have planted it." Vain as a coquette, he magnified civilities, and mistook flattery for fame. Yet the chameleon told Garrick how little he liked the hyperboles of the French, their ecstasies in conversation and even in commerce.

In London Sterne knew the Duke of York, in Paris he knew the Duke of Orleans, nor did the court jester despise court favours. The Duke commissioned his painter, Carmontelle, to draw him in water-colours, and there he stands in smart black on the terrace with a quizzed and quizzing expression. Perhaps he was thinking, as afterwards in the *Sentimental Journey*, "Happy people! that once a week at least are sure to lay down all your cares together, and dance and sing and sport away the weights of grievance, which bow down the spirits of other nations to the earth!"

This mood, however, was not to last. The gipsy in him took fright, and preferred the breezes of the road to the hot air of drawing-rooms. He murmured that politeness tired him, and his paradox, that the French were too "serious" a people, shocked his hosts. If they made greatness gay, he said, they also reversed the process. He wearied of their "beggarly system." He found their pleasures monotonous.

In the late spring, too, alarming news distressed him. The little Lydia, on whom he doted, was asthmatic, and Sterne feared for her safety. He besought his wife and daughter to come out and join him, they would start together for the South. Racket and anxiety told on his own health. Another vessel burst in his lungs, for three days he lay speechless, though once more his spirits came to the rescue. Within a week he was out and bustling, full of preparations for the travellers¹. He wrote minute

¹ Writing afterwards to Hall-Stevenson about this seizure, he said "About a week or ten days before my wife arrived at Paris, I had the same accident I had at Cambridge of breaking a vessel in my lungs. It happened in the night, and I bled the bed full, and finding in the morning I was likely to bleed to death, I sent immediately for a surgeon to bleed me in both arms — This saved me, and with lying speechless for three days upon my back in bed I recovered, the breach healed, and a week after I got out—this, with

instructions for his "dear Bess" and Lydia; he directed his publisher to supply the funds.¹ He was intimate with a Mr Foley, who, together with the firm of Panchaud, managed his money affairs. Foley was about to visit England; he offered to act as their escort, and of these good offices Sterne gladly availed himself.² He cared for their passports; he told his wife what to bring, and how to bring it—the silver coffee-pot and the copper tea-kettle, which would make life cosy, the watch-chains and little volumes to requite attentions. Above all, she was to mind her own health as well as her daughter's, to beware of the prevailing heat, always to drive in the cool of the dawn, and to be pleased with a carriage which he had bought, a bargain. He supervised Lydia's costume: she was to bring two "negligées." He rejoiced that she was "a child of nature, not of art"—which only meant that she was the wayward child of Sterne. The kindness of these letters is pleasant reading after all his gambols. "Lyd" would soon "chatter French like a magpie," he told his wife. ". . . You will do the same in a fortnight.—Dear Bess, I have a thousand wishes, but have a hope for every one of them. You shall chant the same *jubilate*, my dears: So God bless you! My duty to Lydia, which implies my love too; Adieu, believe me your affectionate."

my weakness and hurrying about, made me think it high time to haste to Toulouse" Cf *Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne to his Most Intimate Friends*, published by his daughter, Mrs Medalle (1775), vol II p 10

¹ Cf. Eg MS 1662, f 5

² Sterne wrote a grateful letter to this Mr Foley and his wife. One sentence is worth quoting—"The friendship, goodwill and politeness of my two friends I never doubted to me or mine, and I return you both all a grateful man is capable of, which is merely my thanks I have taken, however, the liberty of sending an Indian Taffety, which Mrs Foley must do me the honour to wear for my wife's sake" Cf *Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne*, p 6

Sterne's feelings are always more interesting than his actions, but at this time he truly said of himself that he did a thousand things which "cut no figure but in the doing." Two of these were long remembered. Crossing the Pont Neuf (the scene of his notary's adventure) he stopped short before the statue of Henri Quatre and, to the crowd's astonishment, knelt down before the pedestal — "Why are you all staring at me?" he cried, "do likewise all of you!" Down knelt the wondering legions, who must have discerned some method in Yorick's madness?

The second is a tale which Thackeray used to prove that Sterne was "no gentleman," despite the protests of any "superfine friend." He suppressed it, however, in the final form of his *English Humourists*, and, indeed, the story amounts to little but a wit's vainglory over his cups. Louis Dutens, English chargé d'affaires at Turin, afterwards in London, a Whig intriguer, and still later a witness at Lady Hamilton's wedding, attended Lord Tavistock, in the general wake of paid peacemakers, to Paris. On June the fourth, the King's birthday, that peer entertained some distinguished Englishmen at dinner. Sterne sat next to Dutens, but had not caught his name. The talk turned on travel and Turin. Yorick, having heard strange tales of his neighbour with whom he professed acquaintance, now asked him if he knew — himself. The diplomat humoured the humourist, who invented story on story of the envoy's past. Not until Dutens left did the guests inform Sterne ("a little merry") of his offence, and of what he must expect on the morrow. The delinquent sallied forth in fear and trembling, and his apology was like himself. Over-eagerness, he said, to amuse the company was responsible. Dutens at once absolved him,

¹ This story comes from Garat's *Memoirs of Suard*, and is cited by Professor Cross in his *Life and Times of Sterne*, p. 281.

adding that he was as much amused at the blunder as any of the party, that Sterne had said nothing to offend, and that if he had known the man he spoke of as well as Dutens did he might have said much worse. Thereupon he proffered friendship, and off went Sterne delighted. The biter had been bit; that was all.¹

Sterne had not wished to go south. He had hoped to have returned home by Holland at the end of May. But the double stroke of his daughter's illness and his own left him no other choice, and he resolved to settle at Toulouse where his friends the Hewitts were staying. None of them, he wrote, could stand another winter at York. So he obtained leave of absence from the Archbishop, and duly provided for his parish, appointing "home deputies." On the eighth of July 1762, Mrs Sterne and Lydia entered Paris, and three days later they set off in hopes and spirits, under a sky "as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's oven."

Sterne purposely prolonged his route. He meant this journey to be one of sentiment, and to introduce it into his next instalment of *Tristram*. Not a chance that his observant eye could furnish should be missed. Gil Blas was not fonder of the humours of the road, and Sterne's mind was a spying-glass, extending to animals, waggons, and still-life. He watched the effect on a donkey of a macaroon after an artichoke; and when he bought a basket of figs and discovered eggs at the bottom, he at once turned it into a case of conscience. Of every city he made a peep-show, of every village a fair. He examined the passers-by as a pedlar gauges his customers; their very exclamations enhanced his bric-à-brac. And on his return he brought all this glittering merchandise to market.

¹ This incident, also mentioned by Professor Cross (pp 290-2), comes from Dutens's *Memoirs of a Traveller*

by one, into my hat :—One was twisted this way,—another twisted that—*Ay, by my faith, and when they are published, quoth I, they will be worse twisted still.*”

With a like quaintness he treats of the clock and the cathedral. *He* went no farther than the west door, while the *clock*, he was told, “had not gone for some years.” He reached the Jesuits’ library, where he hoped for a general history of China in thirty Chinese volumes, but all the Jesuits were ill, and the library was closed. And this signifies that the Paris Jesuits were out of favour.

The travellers sailed down the Rhone. Landing at Avignon in a storm, Sterne lost his hat, a mischance which colours his fragment of the Notary. Out of it he made a proverb—“Avignon is more subject to high winds than any town in all France”—but no Slawkenbergius was there to explain it. The Avignonese he found as high and as mighty as their winds ; everyone seemed a patrician, and he feigns that wishing to pull off his jack-boots at the inn door, and putting the mule’s bridle into the hands of an idler, he turned round to thank him—“but *Monsieur le Marquis* had walked in.”

The waiting mule points to a change of plan. Sterne now decided to amble at leisure, while his wife and daughter proceeded by post. How they relished this move may be questioned. Sterne, however, was enchanted to rove in this gipsy fashion while he brought up the rear of so crazy a caravan. Their road lay through Languedoc, and here it was that he kicked off his shoes to dance with the nut-brown maid.

The landscape was rich and smiling. “I had now,” he tells us in *Tristram Shandy*, “the whole South of France, from the banks of the Rhone to those of the Garonne, to traverse upon my mule at my own leisure,—*at my own leisure*,—for I had left Death, the Lord knows—and he only—how far

behind me !—I have followed many a man through France, quoth he, but never at this mettlesome rate—Still he followed,—and still I fled him,—but I fled him cheerfully, still he pursued, but like one who pursued his prey without hope,—as he lagged, every step he lost softened his look—

There is nothing more pleasing to travellers, or more terrible to travel writers, than a large plain, especially if it is without great rivers or bridges, and presents nothing to the eye but one unvaried picture of plenty For after they had once told you that 'tis delicious or delightful (as the case happens), that the soil was grateful, and that Nature pours out all her abundance They have then a large plain upon their hands which they know not what to do with, and it is of little or no use to them but to carry them to some town, and that town, perhaps of little more than a new place to start from to the next plain,—and so on—This is most terrible work,—judge if I don't manage my plains better ”

Sterne did Thrice he loitered half a mile behind First, to confer with a drum-maker who was making drums for the fair of Baucaira and Tarascone—“I did not understand the principle” Next, to turn and return with two Franciscans, who were “straitened more for time” than himself Lastly, to settle the affair of the Provence figs These he entitled his “Plain Stories,” and he called their occasion the busiest and most fruitful of his life He stopped and talked, he says, to every soul (“not in a full trot”) that met him He waited for every soul behind “Hailing all those who were going their cross-roads, arresting all kinds of beggars, pilgrims, fiddlers, friars—not passing by a woman in a mulberry tree without tempting her into conversation with a pinch of snuff” He seized every handle of what size or shape soever that chance held out to him “I turned,” he boasts, “my plain into a city, I

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was always in company and with great variety too ; and as my mule loved society as much as myself. . . .—I am confident we could have passed through Pall Mall or St James's Street for months together, with fewer adventures,—and seen less of human nature."

And so, dancing the song of the "sun-burnt daughter of labour," and "only changing partners and towns," he "danced it away from Lunelle to Montpellier ; from thence to Pesçenas, Beziers— along through Narbonne, Carcasson, and Castle Naudary, till at last I danced myself into Pedrillo's pavilion" ! The sentimental traveller had settled at Toulouse.

Sterne is more fascinating in motion than at rest. His stay in the Provençal town, with its "clear climate of fantasy and perspiration," would pall if dwelt upon. It lasted ten months, from the August of 1762 to the June of 1763. Sterne's letters of business and friendship give a perspective of his life, and at no moment did he live more happily with his family ; semi-detachment from Mrs Sterne seems only to have issued in peace between them. The Hewitts and an Abbé Macarty had found him the "pavilion," which lay in the southern quarter, sleepy and sequestered. "We cannot easily go wrong," he wrote to Hall-Stevenson, "though by the bye, the devil is seldom found sleeping under a hedge." He soon described his habitation to the friend who had seen his wife across the water. The house was "most deliciously placed at the extremity of the town, well furnished, and elegant beyond anything I looked for—'tis built in the form of a hotel with a pretty court towards the town and behind the best garden in Toulouse, laid out in serpentine walks, and so large that the company in our quarter usually come to walk there in the evenings for which they have my consent —'the more the merrier.'" It consisted "of a good

salle à manger above stairs adjoining to the very great *salle à compagnie* as large as the Baron D'Holbach's, three handsome bed-chambers with dressing rooms to them—below stairs two very good rooms for myself, one to study in, the other to see company—I have moreover cellars round the court and all other offices—Of the same landlord I have bargained to have the use of a country-house which he has two miles out of town, so that myself and all my family have nothing more to do than to take our hats and remove from the one to the other—My landlord is moreover to keep the gardens in order—And what do you think I am to pay for all this? Neither more nor less than thirty pounds a year—All things are cheap in proportion—so we shall live for very very little ”

Here Sterne came to a halt He drank asses' milk every morning, he even began to grow stout and well-looking He resumed *Tristram* and gloated over the love-making of Uncle Toby, with a glass of Frontignac ever on his table The Hewitts were more than amiable, and the Sternes were welcomed by the English colony of health-seekers But to be fixed disagreed with him some sort of motion and excitement were the breath of his nostrils True, the winter brought distractions Abbé Tollot and a mutual friend Sir Charles Danvers came over to relieve the tedium, a troupe of English actors arrived, and their performances were catching, for the Sternes and Hewitts, “fiddling, laughing and singing and cracking jokes,” turned their minds to amateur theatricals They played Mrs Centlivre's *Busy-Body* with an improvised orchestra in the big drawing-room, followed by Vanbrugh's and Cibber's *Journey to London*, which Sterne seems to have patched up, into a *Journey to Toulouse*

But the cold and damp winds of December told upon his health, and he had no stimulus to help it On the

contrary, his finances depressed him. "Ten cartloads" of the new *Shandys* were on his booksellers' hands, and by March, from the half-dozen guineas which he noted in December, he had a beggarly "five louis to vapour with in this land of coxcombs." Even next summer he was arranging with Beckett for some remittances due on a few fresh sales; but against these had to be set the sums previously advanced to Mrs Sterne,¹ and it is a wonder how her husband weathered these months of embarrassment. Foley perhaps financed him: he was always generous, though occasional misunderstandings arose which were soon explained. His dissatisfaction with the French revived; their courtesies fell flat. He grew visibly worse. The doctors² advised the waters of Banyers (Bagnères de Bigorre), as he told his archbishop. To him he communicated the "continued warfare with agues, fevers and physicians," aggravated by the strong bouillons prescribed for him. He had overpreached, he protested; and he begged, with a smile, to be received into some "Hôtel des Invalides, if such existed, upon any solitary plain betwixt here and Arabia Felix."³ This is not the sole instance where he ascribes to his preaching some of the evils resulting from his practice. London, not Coxwold, had exhausted him, and he had tasked himself more in drawing-rooms than in pulpits. But the virtues of Bagnères brought no relief, while its thin air tried his lungs, so the goad of travel urged him once more. A projected journey to Spain fell through. Off he wandered southward, in undescribed zigzags, seeking rest and finding none, out of health and out of pocket, till at length he returned to Toulouse, where a welcome remittance awaited

¹ Cf Add MSS 21,508, f 47

² One of these physicians, Dr Jamme, remained his friend and correspondent long afterwards

³ Sterne to Archbishop Drummond, May 1763 Cf. Professor Cross's *Life*, p 313

him Once more he was driven to the doctors They prescribed Montpellier, and to Montpellier, towards the end of September, he bent his steps

That spot was to the eighteenth century what Mentone means now to ours—a picturesque winter-garden for English invalids Its bridge, where the Rodamont of Spanish story had fought for the maidens he rescued, must have appealed to the romanticist's fancy. But the physicians reigned paramount, and almost "poisoned" him with their "*bouillons rafraichissants*—cocks flayed alive and boiled with poppy seeds, then pounded in a mortar, afterwards passed through a sieve" "There is to be one crawfish in it," he wrote, "and I was gravely told it must be a male one—a female would do me more hurt than good" Dr Antoine Fize's presided, and Sterne suffered under his ministrations

So did Smollett, who arrived there in November He has pictured the old Parliament-town and its surroundings in the caustic *Travels* which he published three years afterwards "Smelfungus" was no sentimentalist, he took things as they were, and often worse than they were He was one of those who, in Sterne's words, could travel from Dan to Beersheba without a throb of sentiment throughout his itinerary runs a vein of sourish realism Himself a surgeon, he consulted Mrs Sterne on his health, and it may be that he and her husband shook hands It is less likely that they did so cordially They were antipathies The rough, robust pessimist, who had slated *Tristram Shandy*, must have loathed the sickly rosiness of the man of feeling, and I am not sure that if we had met Sterne we should not have shared Smollett's opinion Despite the strength of his humour, something there was always about him of the amphibious, of the merman—a human face, a human voice, but a fish's tail instead of legs He never stood, he swam, and his element was the brine of his tears,

his very charm lay in his elusiveness. The firm shore was uncongenial, and the petty amusements of Montpellier soon bored him. There were theatres, concerts, the "insipid" French, and the eternal round of the English, who tend to display their Sunday worst on a foreign soil. He depended on stray travellers. Tollot visited "*ce bon et agréable Tristram*," and, with Tollot again, the Thornhills, who had been touring with Hewitt and a sporting squire of the Skelton set, by name Charles Turner. They found him persecuted by his wife's jealousy, borne, they said, with angelic patience. In truth, Mrs Sterne was ailing: rheumatism tormented her, and the "arm of flesh" reasserted itself, though its victim now took his drubbings meekly. Perhaps she had cause to belabour a truant, who could seldom resist the lures either of roads or petticoats. Sterne long fretted to return to England. He told them that he was bound for his other wife, the Church, whom he had treated, it must be owned, in the same cavalier manner. In a word, he was sick of Montpellier, though apparently not of his tormentress, and once more his health troubled him. He called himself a ghost; he disregarded his body. "I took a ride," he wrote to Foley, "towards Perenas—I returned home in a shivering fit, though I ought to have been in a fever, for I had fired my beast and he was as unmovable as Don Quixote's wooden horse, and my arm was half dislocated in whipping him—This, quoth I, is inhuman—No, says a peasant on foot behind me, I'll drive him home—So he laid on his posteriors, but 'twas needless—as soon as his face was turned towards Montpellier he began to trot. . . . This fever has confined me ten days to my bed—I have suffered in this scuffle with death terribly—but unless this spirit of prophecy deceives me, I shall not die but live. In the meantime, dear Foley, let us live as merrily and as *innocently* as we can—which is

every bit as good, if not better than, a bishoprick to me—and I desire no other” The sharp air of Montpellier agreed with him even worse than the rarity of Bagnères No sooner had he recovered from his accident than again his lungs gave way Quiet, climate, and Mrs Sterne alike provoked his patience He kept thinking of his friends at Paris, and of young Fox revisiting that neighbourhood The sole bar to his escape was his daughter, now sixteen and frolicsome, the darling of his heart Mrs Sterne he only wished with him that Lydia might be near, but she, on her part, refused to budge “My dear Lydia,” he soon wrote, “I acquiesced in your stay in France—likewise it was your mother’s wish, but I must tell you both that (unless your health had not been a plea made use of) I should have wished you both to have returned with me”

At length his mind was made up, husband and wife entered into a treaty —“I told Mrs Sterne that I should set out for England very soon, but as she chooses to remain in France for two or three years I have no objection except that I wish my girl in England.” And then sounds his farewell to Montpellier —“The States of Languedoc are met—’tis a fine raree show,—with the usual accompaniments of fiddles, bears and puppet shows—I believe I shall step into my post chaise with more alacrity to fly from these States than a Frenchman would fly to them—and except a tear on parting with my little slut, I shall be in high spirits, and every step I take that brings me nearer England will, I think, help to set this poor frame to rights My wife chooses to go to Montauban, rather than stay here, in which I am truly passive” So he writes to Mrs Foley, and a man would not so write to a woman who disapproved of his conduct The lifelong separation from Mrs Sterne which dates henceforward was of her own choice, though in a

sense it seems of his making. But she was not his home, and homeward he now turned with alacrity.

Tollot had offered him his Paris lodgings, and in the first week of March 1764, he set off for the French capital. There the old merry-go-round was again set spinning—Trotter, Tollot, the Thornhills, all Holbach's circle, with the fresh addition, John Wilkes, the outlaw. Weekly Sterne dined with the new ambassador, Lord Hertford, with his son Lord Beauchamp, or the diplomatic Lord Tavistock. But Wilkes was a bad companion—a profligate in life, in word, in politics, who yet had come to typify the stand for liberty and the call of generous instinct. The born Jacobin trades on sentiment, and, long before the name of Jacobinism was known, Wilkes traded upon Sterne. Tristram, it might be thought, had consigned his bands and cassock to the Maid of Languedoc's keeping, yet he still clung to the stage of his pulpit. Preaching had undone him, he said. He had vowed to preach no more ; yet, when bidden to preach before the Embassy, he spared neither his lungs nor his sentiment. His discourse was that sermon on Hezekiah, which unravelled the double motives of man. It made something of a stir. Paris still chattered of Tristram and his vagaries ; but, after two long years, the sensation had grown stale. The Parisians craved piquant dishes, and a new sauce was on the table to whet their appetite—David Hume, historian and philosopher. On the very night of Sterne's pulpit eloquence both he and the Scotsman dined at the Embassy. A "prompt French Marquis," mistaking Hume for John Home of *Douglas* fame, asked him whether he was the playwright. "'No,' said Hume mildly.—'*Tant pis,*' replied the Marquis. 'It is Hume, the historian,' said another.—'*Tant mieux,*' said the Marquis." And "Mr Hume, who is a man of excellent heart, returned thanks for both." Are not all these things written in the book of the *Senti-*

mental Journey? And then, true to the scepticism which made an old Edinburgh housewife refuse to carry the "atheist" across the marsh until he had said the Lord's Prayer, Hume assailed Sterne for his adherence to miracle "*David*," the humourist thought, "was disposed to make a little merry with the parson," and in return the parson was equally disposed to rally the heretic "We laughed at one another and the company laughed with us both"¹ Thus Yorick shook his bells at infidelity

But in these distractions he was ill at ease His heart stayed with his daughter at Montauban He sent her books, *Spectators* and *Metastasio*, begging her to study the former, and read the latter only as a pastime He warned her against friendships with French women, he was so jealous of her, he said, that he would be miserable to see her with the least grain of coquetry in her composition She was musical—he sent her a "guittar," while he forbade her to waste time on drawing, for that sphere she had "no genius," though "she could never be made to believe it" "Remember," he concludes, "to write to me as a friend—in short, whatever comes into your little head, and then it will be natural—If your mother's rheumatism continues and she chooses to go to Bagnères, tell her not to be stopped for want of money for my purse shall be as open as my heart I have preached at the Ambassador's Chapel—on Hezekiah—(an odd subject, your mother will say) There was a concourse of all nations, and religions too—I shall leave Paris in a few days—I am lodged in the same hotel with Mr T [Thornhill] They are good and generous souls—Tell your mother that I hope she will write to me and that when she does so I may also receive a letter from

¹ Cf *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr Laurence Sterne* (1788), pp 126-7 This friendly passage of arms has been frequently introduced into biographies

my Lydia. Kiss your mother for me, and believe me your affectionate—L. Sterne.”¹

In money matters his word was his bond; so long as he had a shilling in the world, he was to assure them, ninepence of it should be his wife's and daughter's. Those ninepences, and more, were regularly sent, and they strained his resources. Indeed the need for replenishment was one of the reasons that now urged him to London. On Thursday, May the twenty-fourth, he quitted Paris with Tollot and Thornhill. When he had first set out, it was bruited in the London papers that he was dead, and, like Sheridan and Lord Brougham, he had enjoyed the satisfaction of perusing his own obituary. His return proved similarly a nine days' wonder. By the beginning of June he installed himself with Tollot at the Thornhills' house in John Street, and within a week he sat once more to Sir Joshua for his portrait.² He could never be out of evidence.

¹ Sterne to Lydia, Paris, 15th May 1764. Cf. *Original Letters* (1788), vol. II p 75.

² This is the portrait which Sterne gave to Edward Stanley, who bequeathed it to James Watman of Ventors, Maidstone. Cf. Professor Cross's *Life*, p 331.

CHAPTER XV

UP TO THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY (JUNE 1764 TO
OCTOBER 1765)

LONDON was empty, Garrick on the Continent. Save Foley, there were few to visit, and when the one called on the other, the other was out like the two buckets of a well, in Sterne's simile. There was nothing for the prodigal but a return to his "wife, the Church." He tried to break the shock by joining Hall-Stevenson, who was running a horse at the York races. A brilliant concourse assembled, including Lord Rockingham, Tollot and Hewitt posted down, and Sterne entertained him with hosts of his friends. Nor were these outings enough for one who could never sate his thirst for variety. Some woman or other always tugged at his heart-strings. He sent letters of recommendation to Foley at Paris for a Miss Tuting—"a lady known and loved by the whole kingdom." And no sooner had the profane shepherd peeped at his "few poor sheep in the wilderness" than off he scampered to Scarborough, in the train too of no less a luminary than Shelburne,¹ with whom was Lord Granby, just appointed Master-General of the Ordnance. Sterne's health supplied the pretext. Directly he came

¹ That Lord Shelburne accompanied him in this expedition is clear from his letter to Foley (then returned to Paris) of 16th November 1764. Cf. *Letters to his Most Intimate Friends* (1775), p. 104. Professor Cross gives this matter quite accurately in his *Life*.

back, he told Hall-Stevenson (fresh from Harrogate) that he had been drinking the waters ever since the races, and would have benefited more had he not overplayed "the good fellow" with "my Lord Granby and Co."; and even now he would fain have "sacrificed a few days to the God of Laughter" with him and his jolly set. No sooner was he ensconced in his "philosophical hut" than he longed again to be off to Skelton Castle; and, even in the performance of duties, which he never shirked, he needed frisks for incentives. He was at work on the penultimate part of his *Tristram*, the volumes of Uncle Toby's courtship. His "northern vintage," he said, had so gripped his brain, it came upon him so "like an armed man at nights," that he must yield for quietness' sake, or "be hag-ridden with the conceit of it all his life long." "I have been miss-ridden this last week by a couple of romping girls, *bien mises et comme il faut*, who . . . have rendered my judgment and fancy more airy than they wanted—These things accord not well with sermon-making, but 'tis my fool errantry, as Sancho says, and that's all that can be made of it." A good excuse for flirtation! Don Quixote ran in his mind. "I am as honest," he wrote to Foley, "(as Sancho Pança says), only *not so rich*"; and then he told him that if Mrs Sterne should want thirty louis more she was to have them, and he would balance all "with honour" at Christmas.

His parish round, the distant Mrs Sterne on the one side and the romping misses on the other, such are the weather-signs of his temperament. "Were it possible," he once wrote, "to take an inventory of all our sentiments and feelings—just and unjust—holy and impure—there would appear as little difference between them as there is between instinct and reason,—or—wit and madness. The barriers which separate these—like the real essence of beauties—escape the piercing eye of metaphysicks and cannot be pointed out

more clearly than geometricians define a straight line which is said to have length without breadth Oh, you learned anatomical aggregates, who pretend to instruct other aggregates! Be as candid as the sage whom ye pretend to revere—and *tell them that all you know is that you know nothing*"¹

Up he came for the London season, scattering requests for subscriptions to his books Once more he played fast and loose with his time, his health, and his feelings Once more a spa was prescribed for him—on this emergency, the waters of Bath Bath was much to his mind, for it was gay, and Mrs Vesey was there, whom he admired beyond measure to the bitter end He found himself in a bevy of Irish beauties There was Mrs Gore, with her then "fine form and Grecian face," with Mrs Moore, whom Sheridan was to praise in his "Clio's Protest," and among the English, the Mrs Ferguson whom he called his "witty widow," and who archly inquired whether "Tristram Shandy was married" or not² With all these Sterne philandered, and he got into trouble afterwards for tattling about them "Juno or Minerva," he said, were his alternatives of womanhood, Mrs Vesey was certainly his Minerva, perhaps Mrs Ferguson was the Juno And so this incurable Paris went about handing his apples of discord, playing at romance and calling it love, playing at love and calling it friendship There is no end to the mazes of his fancy, and he always maintained, as in his first love-letter, that to "steal from the world" was his acme of bliss This he called the enthusiastic spirit, for he played at enthusiasm also He was the greatest amateur player in the charade of romance since Boccaccio hymned his Fiammetta and made a *fête*-

¹ Cf *Sterne's Letters to his Friends* (1775), p 67

² He told her that the reply must be left to her own conscience. Cf Professor Cross's *Life*, p 342 There were *two* Mrs Fergusons He was to meet the other (the American Miss Graeme) in the following year

champêtre of passion. "Had I lived," he wrote, "in days of yore, when virtue and sentiment bore price, I should have been the most peerless knight of them all! Some down-hearted damsel in distress would ever have been my object—to wipe away the tears from off the cheek of such a friendless fair one I would go to Mecca, and for a friend to the end of the world.¹ And again, to another friend: "If foul fortune should take thy stately palfrey with all its good and gilded trappings beneath thee, or if while thou art sleeping by moonlight beneath a tree—it should escape from thee and find another master;—or if the miserable banditti of the world should plunder thee— . . . thou wouldst find out some distant cell and become a hermit; and endeavour to persuade thyself not to regret the separation from those friends who will ever regret their separation from thee."² These two extracts contain the whole sentiment of Sterne. But he was a pert adventurer also. Back he came in April, reinvigorated, and down he sat in the Mount Coffee-house to besiege Lord Bute's daughter, the fair Lady Percy (then at loggerheads with her husband). His note would stand unrivalled in impudence, had not its recipient probably regarded it as a mere masquerade, while its writer fancied himself some gallant of romance. "There is a strange mechanical effect," writes Yorick, surveying himself in his glass, "a strange mechanical effect produced in writing a *billet doux* within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an innamorato.—For this cause (but mostly because I am to dine in this neighbourhood) have I, Tristram Shandy, come forth from my lodgings to a Coffee-house, the nearest I can find to my dear Lady Percy's, and have called for a sheet of gilt paper

¹ Cf *Sterne's Letters to his Friends* (1775), p 15

² Cf *Original Letters of the late Rev Mr Laurence Sterne* (1788), p 184

to try the truth of this article of my creed—Now for it—Oh, my dear lady, what a dish-clout of a soul thou hast made of me!—I think, by the by, this is a little too familiar an introduction for so unfamiliar a situation as I stand in with you, where, Heaven knows, I am kept at a distance, and despair of getting one inch nearer you with all the sobs and whines I can think of to recommend myself to you—Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you—and as far as his legs would carry him rather than thus aimlessly, foolishly and fool-hardily expose himself afresh,—and afresh where his heart and his reason tells him he would be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone?—Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me? Does it give you pleasure to make me more unhappy or does it add to your triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit I am a fool, the weakest, most ductile, and most tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of,—and the most unsettled in my purposes and restless of recovering my right mind—It is but an hour ago that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you,—and, after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, of *not being led into temptation*—out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh and the devil, not doubting but I should finally trample them all down under my feet—And now am I got so near you—within this vile stone's cast of your house, I feel myself drawn into a vortex that has turned my brain upside down, and though I had purchased a box ticket to carry me to Miss ——'s benefit, yet I know very well that, was a single line directed to me to let me know Lady Percy would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her I dine at Mr Cowper's in Wigmore Street in this

neighbourhood, where I shall stay till seven, in hopes you purpose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time, I shall conclude you are better disposed of, and shall take a sorry hack and seriously jog on to the play.—Curse on the word! I know nothing but sorrow,—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly but) most sincerely,—L. Sterne.”¹

After this, what need to bridge over the gap that intercepts the Journey? Sterne returns to Coxwold; he proceeds with *Tristram* and his homilies; he re-attends the York races (in the August of 1765), where he meets a fresh enchantress, the Philadelphian Miss Graeme;² he besieges friends to subscribe for his *Sermons*—“dog cheap, only half a crown” His Sutton parsonage burns down; the frightened curate, Marmaduke Collier, runs away, and Sterne, befriending him, laments that the wicked world should breathe a word to the contrary. He provides diligently for his wife, who had removed to Vacluse—the very sound of its name thrills Sterne with echoes of Petrarch and Laura, though Laura, he significantly adds, was not Mrs Sterne. Yet two years later, when she (not Laura) was unwell, he would rush to her aid, and he grieves lest she should suffer in solitude. His daughter was ever in his thoughts. She had been proposed for by a French marquis; and Sterne put him off with characteristic humour—by balancing sentiment against fortune and exacting an impossible dowry.

And in October he turns his face towards London, his “Jerusalem”—blessed with the milk and honey of

¹ Cf. Mrs Medalle's edition of her father's letters, vol. iii p 128 Professor Cross (p 343) has been the first to allot this letter to its real date Thackeray supposed it to belong to the spring of two years later, when Sterne was engaged with Eliza Draper, but the Professor's industry has made certain that Thackeray was wrong The singer whose benefit he speaks of attending, was Miss Wilford at Covent Garden

² Cf Professor Cross's *Life*, p 365

sentiment and applause. Again, however, the writing stood on the wall. He fell very ill, there was nothing for it but an Italian journey. Already even his decadence had decayed, and though he was to write the easiest of his compositions in the perfection of his style, the man had visibly dwindled. His romantic escapades had been mainly nominal, but his frail being had been torn to tatters. Disease and delusion never forsook him. His dear friend Mrs Meadows was entreated to help him at Coxwold, where they would "sit in the shade while in the evening the fairest of all the milk-maids" who passed by his gate should weave a garland for her. "This plaguy cough of mine seems to gain ground in spite of me—but while I have strength to run away from it I will—I have been wrestling with it for this twenty years past—and what with laughter and good spirits have prevented its giving me a fall—But my antagonist presses closer than ever upon me—and I have nothing left on my side but another journey abroad—à-propos—are you for a scamper of that sort? If not, perhaps you will accompany me as far as Dover that we may laugh together on the beach, to put Neptune in a good humour before I embark—God bless you and believe me ever yours."

Fifty-two years had not lessened his vanity, and before he started for a brief sojourn in Paris he told Foley how "terrible" a thing it was to be in Paris "without a periwig on a man's head," while he begged him to order "une peruque—a bourse, au mieux—c'est à dire—une la plus extraordinaire—la plus jolie—la plus gentille." He had the honour, he added, to be a great critic, nor least fastidious in his fancy of perukes. Once he had been a tatterdemalion, but in Paris, and at his age, he must suffer to be beautiful.

At nine on the morning of the tenth of October

1765 he stood on the Calais packet.¹ He anticipated pleasure mixed with reflection, "the vintage when all nature is joyous," and philosophical saunters "on the other side of the Alps."² And to other vintages he looked forward also. Once, it will be recalled, he had told Mrs Vesey that "the heart is above the little inconveniences of its prison-house and will one day escape from them all." That scapegrace of a "heart" faired forth on the last wanderings which culminated in Eliza Draper. Not yet had he encountered her, though the refrain of her name slipped into the pages of the *Sentimental Journey* afterwards. But Eliza's essence perfumes them, and when she came she was merely an embodiment of his habit, and the reflection of his caprice.

¹ The date is indicated by an autograph letter (in the possession of Mr Robson) from Sterne to Becket about his *Sermons*. It is dated "october 19 1765," and Sterne says that he arrived, much the better, "five days ago" This letter is interesting otherwise, as he tells the publisher of his *Sermons*, that he had written a preface for them, but now thought they had better go forth without an "apology" "let them speak for themselves"

² Sterne to David Garrick, 16th March 1765 Cf Mrs Medalle's *Letters of Sterne* (1775), vol II p 109

CHAPTER XVI

THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY (FRANCE AND ITALY
OCTOBER 1765 TO MAY 1766)

HE had told Hall-Stevenson that pleasure and profit would be combined, that he would "spring game" in and by his sentimental journey. Its imperfect record remains partly in the work, partly in his impromptu letters. These impressions must be fused together. The book is all filigree, the letters give passing glimpses of those Italian scenes which, had he lived, Sterne intended to sketch in literary form. His *Sentimental Journey* appeared on 27th February 1768, not a month before he died, in two volumes, small in size, but not in import. They are dissolving views —

I

Calais—The bottle of Burgundy that mellowed Sterne into universal peace, even with the exacting Bourbons—The after-sense that he was not mechanical and could confound "the most *physical précieuse* in France"—The after-mood that he "had had an affair with the moon in which there was neither sin nor shame"—The sad entry of the meek Franciscan monk with his horn snuff-box, presented to the "epicure in charity"¹ who had *not* given him alms, but who was to shed tears on the nettles by his grave—Who knows

¹ This phrase occurs in one of his letters

them not? And who knows not also the prelude of the post-chaise, that *Désobligeant* in which Sterne penned his preface while Monsieur Dessein was out at prayers? It was well for Dessein that he came back, for his guest's book made his fortune, and to this day Sterne's desk and book are visible.

II

And then the duet at the *Rémise* door of Yorick and the mysterious lady, their counter-glances and pauses—Her countenance, of which Sterne said ere he had seen it, “When the heart flies out before the understanding, it saves the judgment a world of pain. . . . Good God! How a man might lead such a creature as this round the world with him!”—And after he had seen it (and read Eliza's into it): “It was a face of about six and twenty—of a clear transparent brown, simply set off without rouge or powder.—It was not critically handsome, but there was that in it, which in the frame of mind I was in, attached me much more to it—it was interesting; I fancied it wore a widowed look and in that state of its declension which had passed the two first paroxysms of sorrow and was quietly beginning to reconcile itself to its loss—but a thousand other distresses might have traced the same lines; I wished to know what they had been—and was ready to enquire, (had the same *bon ton* of conversation permitted, as in the days of Esdras)—‘What aileth thee? and why art thou disquieted? And why is thy understanding troubled?’” —Their silent paces before the coach-house, while she walked musing on one side—their silent entry together into it and the standing carriage, when Monsieur Dessein shut the door—Sterne's reflection that grave people hate love for the name's sake, selfish people for their own, and hypocrites for heaven's, and the lady's blushing declaration: “You

have been making love to me all this while " How finely all this is shadowed ! There is something inimitable in the visionary visitants and their dumb show of feeling Were Sterne in a desert, he once exclaimed, he would find out wherewith in it to call forth his affections, he would fasten them upon some sad myrtle, or seek some melancholy cyprus, he would court their shade, and greet them kindly for their protection He would cut his name upon them, and swear they were the loveliest trees throughout the desert, and if their leaves withered he would teach them to mourn, and when they rejoiced he would rejoice along with them He was not in a desert he was in a post-chaise, and the sad myrtle was the Marquise de Lambert, now on her way from Brussels to Paris

III

Montreuil and Janatone revisited the lovely Janatone, who afterwards became a devoted wife and was introduced in England by Sterne to his Eliza¹—The entrance and engagement of La Fleur the drummer-boy, ushered in by Janatone's father La Fleur, who "had set out early in life as gallantly as most Frenchmen do that *serve* for a few years, at the end of which, having satisfied the sentiment and found, moreover, that the honour of beating the drum was likely to be its own reward he retired *à ses terres*, and lived *comme il plaisoit à Dieu*—that is to say, upon nothing " And then the reflection "So, quoth Wisdome, you have hired a drummer to attend you in this tour of yours through

¹ Cf an autograph letter from Mrs Eliza Draper to her friend Mrs James, of 15th April 1772, Add MSS 34,527, ff 47-70 (alluded to by Professor Cross in his *Life*, p 499) "The 'lovely Janatone' died 3 years ago, after surviving her husband about a week, and her friend 12 months She calls her 'our smart, pretty French woman'" The Professor does not seem to have connected this name with the Montreuil beauty's, but the identity seems a fair inference.

France and Italy! 'Psha! said I, and do not one half of our gentry go with a humdrum *compagnon de voyage* and have a pauper and the devil and all to pay besides? . . . But you can do something else, La Fleur? said I.—Oh, *qu'oui*—I can make spatterdashes, and play a little upon the fiddle.—Bravo! said Wisdome.—Why, I play the bass myself, said I.—We shall do very well. . . . He had all the dispositions in the world.—It is enough for heaven! said I, interrupting him—and ought to be enough for me. So supper coming in, and having a frisky English spaniel on one side of my chair, and a French valet with as much hilarity in his countenance as ever nature painted in one, on the other—I was satisfied to my heart's content with my empire—and if monarchs knew what they would be at, they might be as satisfied as I was."—And then the throng of beggars in the hotel yard, as they drive away—The "poor tattered soul without a shirt," who "instantly withdrew his claim by retiring two steps out of the circle, and making a disqualifying bow on his part. Had the whole parterre called out *place aux dames*, with one voice, it would not have conveyed the sentiment of deference for the sex with half the effect."

IV

The *Dead Ass* and the *Postillion*.—The *Rémise* lady again, at Amiens—The love-letter furbished from La Fleur's pocket-book—And at length, Paris, and that famous parley with the demure grisette who handed her wrist for Sterne to experiment on:—

"Would to Heaven, my dear Eugenius, thou hadst passed by, and beheld me sitting in my black coat, and in my lack-a-day-sickal manner, counting the throbs of it, one by one, with as much true devotion as if I had been watching the critical ebb or flow of her fever— . . . Trust me, Eugenius, I should have said, there are worse occupations

in the world than feeling a woman's pulse —But a Grisset's! thou wouldst have said—and in an open shop, Yorick!—so much the better, for when my views are practical, Eugenius, I care not if all the world saw me feel it ”

All the world had seen Kitty at the York mercer's —Sterne was never shamefaced, nor at this juncture was the invading husband —“Monsieur is so good, quoth she, as he passed by us, as to give himself the trouble of feeling my pulse —The husband took off his hat, and making me a bow, said I did him too much honour—and having said that, he put on his hat and walked out ”—And last, the minute by-play with the gloves “She begged I would try a single pair, which seemed to be the least —She held it open—my hand slipped into it at once—It will not do, said I, shaking my head a little—No, said she, doing the same thing Do you think, my dear Sir, said she, mistaking my embarrassment, that I could ask a *sous* too much of a stranger—and of a stranger whose politeness, more than his want of gloves, has done me the honour to lay himself at my mercy? *M'en croyez capable?* Faith! not I, said I, and if you were, you are welcome—So counting the money into her hand, and with a lower bow than one generally makes to a shop-keeper's wife, I went out, and her lad with the parcel followed me ”—What artful artlessness! What trifles! Yet how they haunt the memory!

The “Grissett” is but a link in the slender chain of Sterne's introduction to Madame de Rambouillet, the great lady of Paris, and his way of treating his adventures is like his reflection on the contrast between the sobriety of English and the extravagance of French advertisement —“What a difference! *'Tis like time to eternity*”—La Fleur enters with the bouquet which his sweetheart had given to a footman, the footman to a sempstress, and the sempstress to a fiddler—The bouquet enveloped in the sheets of

Sterne's fragment of the Notary.—The fanciful joins hands with the real, and all the figures are traceries.

V

What have these people of his brain to do with his Paris companions—with Wilkes and Foote, now prominent; with the magnificent John Crawfurd, and the genial Earl of Upper Ossory; with quiet Lord William Gordon, or the starched Horace Walpole, always shivering at the impalpable, though he condescended to the *Sentimental Journey*? These men of taste were all satellites revolving round the blind, unquenchable Madame du Deffand, who would have passed that "Case of Delicacy" which Crawfurd told Sterne, and which closes the *Sentimental Journey* with offence.

Off goes the peruke; on come the slippers. Away the roamer flies to Lyons, along "the Bourbonnois, the sweetest part of France," where he spends "a joyous week," and meets Horne Tooke, the poulterer's son and unfrocked parson, now *en route* for Voltaire. Motley are the gipsy encampments that stud the common of the eighteenth century!

VI

Sterne is in the mountains, ascending Tarare, dismayed by storms. It is not Maria, re-encountered by the wayside forlorn and tuneful, but the less-known Peasant's Supper, and his Grace that here enchant us. In cottages Sterne felt at home, and here some likeness may be seen to Greuze. The painter loved the half-toned sentiment that lives in Sterne; the set damsels with broken pitchers, and yet the simple village life. Might not the following be one of his pictures? certainly it is one of the author's best:—

"It was a little farm-house, surrounded with about twenty acres of vineyard, about as much corn—and close to the house, on one side, was a *potagerie* of an acre and a half

full of everything which could make plenty in a French peasant's house—and on the other side was a little wood which furnished wherewithal to dress it. I walked directly into the house. The family consisted of an old grey-headed man and his wife, with five or six sons and sons-in-law, and their several wives, and a joyous genealogy out of them. They were all sitting down together to their lentil-soup, a large wheaten loaf was in the middle of the table, and a flagon of wine at each end of it promised joy through the stages of the repast—'twas a feast of love. The old man rose up to meet me, and with a respectful cordiality would have me sit down at the table. My heart was set down the moment I entered the room, so I sat down at once like a son of the family, and to invest myself in the character as speedily as I could, I instantly borrowed the old man's knife, and taking up the loaf, cut myself a hearty hunch. Was it this, or tell me, Nature, what else it was that made this morsel so sweet—and to what magick I owed it, that the draught I took of their flagon was so delicious with it, that they remain upon my palate to this hour? If the supper was to my taste—the Grace which followed it was much more so.

“When supper was over, the old man gave a knock upon the table with the haft of his knife, to bid them all prepare for the dance. The moment the signal was given, the women and girls ran together into a back apartment to tie up their hair—and the young men to the door to wash their faces, and change their sabots. And in three minutes every soul was ready upon a little esplanade before the house to begin—The old man and his wife came out last, and placing me betwixt them, sat down upon a sofa of turf by the door. The old man had some fifty years ago been no mean performer upon the *vielle*—and, at the age he was then of, touched it well enough for the purpose. His wife sung now and then a little to the tune—then intermitted

—and joined her old man again, as their children and grandchildren danced before them. It was not till the middle of the second dance, when, from some pauses in the movement wherein they all seemed to look up, I fancied I could distinguish an elevation of spirit different from that which is the cause or the effect of simple jollity.—In a word, I thought I beheld *Religion* mixing in the dance—but as I had never seen her so engaged, I should have looked upon it now as one of the illusions of an imagination which is eternally misleading me, had not the old man, as soon as the dance ended, said, that this was their constant way: and that all his life long, he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice; believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to Heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay.—Or a learned prelate either, said I.”

How strong and simple this is! What a far cry, from mere city sentiment! It is the country side of him, the better part that sweetened rustic pleasures, the strain that justifies his own motive for printing the *Sentimental Journey*—that it was to further the good-will of man and the love of nature. Here he transcends Goldsmith on his own ground. It is well for us that Sterne loitered at Tarare.

VII

Pont Beauvoisin: a deluge of cold rain keeps him discontented, nor did nature's majesty ever fit him. Gradually he goes down to Modane, and on to Turin, where he is presented to the king, and fêted everywhere: “No English here!” he cries in triumph.¹ And here he meets the future comrade of his voyage, Sir James Macdonald, the Highland youth who was to die at Rome. His mother was daughter of the Earl of Eglinton, the

¹ Letter to Penchaud, of 15th November 1765

travelling student whom Walpole found sedate Had Sterne been only a *poscur*, this piece of wisdom would hardly have struck up a friendship at first sight, for he was unaffected, as were most of those whom Walpole disapproved Macdonald, when Sterne fell in with him, was in the leading-strings of a Mr Ogilby (or Ogilvie)—perchance the solemn tutor who seven years later married the future Duchess of Leinster, the aunt of Charles James Fox What an exchange was Yorick who always managed to make friends with the young! And so, together young Dignity and ageing Impudence proceed to Milan, the Italian Paris Martini's concerts were the rage *Enter* Sterne, eager for the music *exit* at the same moment the Marchesa Fagnani, George Selwyn's friend They nearly collide Each stands dodging the other, Sterne, with his peering gaze, the beauty with that boldness transmitted to her daughter, the future Marchioness of Hertford "Life," he wrote, "is too short to be long about the forms of it. I made six efforts to let you go out, or we should have run our heads together" She had made the same number to allow Sterne to come in Instead of striking each other in this way, they struck each other in another, and a *tête-à-tête* ensued Sterne had already met Selwyn during his first visit to Paris, he was to meet him again in London Did he ever, it may be wondered, relate this incident to the cynic who loved little save executions and the Fagnanis? ¹

VIII

On, on to Florence, "in weather delicious as a kindly April," by Parma, Piacenza, and Bologna, where, strange to say, Sterne never mentions the Caracci three snowy days

¹ Professor Cross thinks that Sterne did not meet Selwyn till after his return from his journey, but in his previous journey we find Selwyn's name in Sterne's letters

on the Apennines had proved a sad transition. Three days of the Tuscan capital suffice.¹ Townshend was there, the spendthrift Chancellor; and Cowper, an excursionist sentimental as Sterne; and, as a corrective, the model Duke of Portland, who was to be the figure-head of the Whig party. Sterne dines with Townshend and Cowper; he shares the macaroni, perhaps the music, of Horace Mann. Was Walpole's friend to Tristram's taste? Though Sterne was never formal,² he somehow admires the Venus of Medici's town-bred elegance. It did not attract Smollett, with whom most of the world agrees; and though Smollett was then in England, Sterne banters his contempt.

And then Rome, too great for Sterne, though he had sighed to be "introduced to all the saints in the Pantheon." The classical appealed to him, not the colossal; but the Italians must have found his enthusiasm *molto simpatico*. Little lingers of the man of feeling in the city of empire but stray hints of sketches, and the old girding at Smelfungus, who found nothing better to say of the Pantheon than that it was a huge cock-pit. Wherever he went Smollett grumbled. He would retail his grievances to the world; Sterne retorts that he had better tell them to his doctor.

Naples, the home of sunshine and forgetfulness—in some respects the feminine of Rome — The city of languor agreed with Sterne's constitution; and there, after a fortnight, a young Errington and a Mr Symonds join his party of carnival. Vesuvius erupts, and so does Tristram. "Nothing," he writes, "but Operas, Punch-

¹ During this half-week, however, the portrait was taken which illustrates these pages, and another (by Patch) referred to at the close of this chapter.

² Sterne hated formality. Writing to his friend Sir George Macartney, towards the close of 1767, "My dear friend," he says, "for though you are His Excellency and I still Parson Yorick—I still must call you so—and were you to be next Emperor of Russia I could not write to you or speak to you on any other relation."



Tramati del

Se. 174. 174.

Lorenzo Sterne

nelloes and Masquerades,"—the climate "heavenly,"—"a new principle of health reviving" which he had not felt for years. The Princess Francavilla receives the strangers, —mummers and junketers all. And, "Hæc est Vita dissolutorum"¹ Thus passed their hours till All Fools' day proclaimed it time to depart. Sterne felt refreshed, and it was on this second Roman visit that Nollekens modelled his bust. Ever on the look-out for contributions towards the great expenses of his journey, Sterne hoped to secure a pupil. And here Errington who was off to Venice, comes into play. But all fell through. Suddenly Macdonald caught the ague, and Sterne was seized with home-sickness for his daughter and his wife. Already from Naples he had written a loving letter to Lydia, who was quitting Tours. He desired his debts to be discharged, and "then, my Lydia, if I live, the produce of my pen shall be yours —If fate reserves me not that, the Humane and Good (part for thy father's sake, part for thy own) will never abandon thee"² Her mother, too, had been ailing. If she would only return with him to Coxwold, he would render their summers at Coxwold, their winters at York, as agreeable as he could. He sends them trifles purchased on his way, he is quite marital.

At Rome he stayed till April ended. But he could never resist the spring. His cap and bells were on him. He felt "unaccountably well and most unaccountably nonsensical." So he rushed away once more. Macdonald's plight was not yet serious, nor can Sterne be charged with abandoning him. His mother came to nurse the invalid, but in July he expired.

¹ So Sterne was to tell his Toulouse physician Dr Jamme. For this letter, now in New York, cf. Professor Cross's *Life*, pp. 381, 528.

² Sterne to Lydia, Naples, 3rd February 1766. On 8th February he writes to Foley that his wife informed him of her uneasiness respecting money, and he begs him to relieve her. A hundred louis and a few ducats had been all so far that he had drawn for himself.

IX

Sterne is off to hunt for his family—he knows not where they hide—Countless journeyings and doublings, a tortuous chase through half a dozen towns, till at length, in Franche-Comté he “runs them to earth”—His wife, “very cordial,” but averse to England—“Poor woman, she begs to stay another year or so”—His Lydia, “greatly improved in everything I wished her.” Sterne felt the elixir of life within him—he would write for years, he told Hall-Stevenson, and drop with the pen in his fingers—His wife thought otherwise, and when they parted it was with “melancholy” that she bade adieu. He too felt sad, but Yorick’s sorrows never lasted.

X

So back to Dijon and the vine-blossom. Other blossoms there were besides. A friend of his, “the Countess de M——” [can this be Matignon?], “invites him to her château, “with a dozen of very handsome, agreeable ladies. Her ladyship has the best of hearts, a valuable present not given to everyone.” The scene is a *fête-champêtre*; the weather, the “most celestial in that delicious part of the world”; the background, mountains that grew the best of inspiring Burgundies,—“for her ladyship is not stingy with her wine.” All day long “they lie and chat upon the grass.” The week flies by *al fresco*, a French *Heptameron*.

From romance to prose. He had promised Hall-Stevenson to toast King George’s birthday. Home he hurries—the ninth volume of *Tristram* in his hand, the *Sentimental Journey* in his head. He tarried but three days at Paris, and there Galiani, the Neapolitan envoy, found Yorick wearisome.¹

¹ Cf. Professor Cross’s *Life*, p. 384

Italy and Burgundian juices fermented in his brain, and yet he yearned for England. By June the first he landed. Not two years more of his life remained, but they were pregnant with results. At the beginning of the next year he was to meet Eliza Draper, early in the following, to publish the work which has most renowned him. After his death, Hall-Stevenson tried to continue the *Journey* from notes entrusted to his keeping. Here and there amidst the scrabble a scrap half seems to bear the stamp of Sterne, such as this address to Nature on the precariousness of life —

“With thy help, the life allotted to this weak, this tender fabric shall be rational and just. Instruct me to participate another’s woes to sympathize at distress. Reflect, wretch, on the instability of life itself. Calculate, carter, the days thou hast to live—some ten years or less —Allot the portion thou now spendest for that period and give to the truly needy. Could my prayers prevail with zeal and reason join, misery would be banished from earth, and every month be a vintage for the poor”¹

But never in his lightest vein had he quite dismissed the spectre that hid in ambush. During his brief stay at Florence, Patch, an English artist, had drawn and published a half-caricature, which Walpole treasured. Sterne, startled and haggard, faces the grim intruder, while underneath appears the invocation from *Tristram* which summoned his spirits to drive away the skeleton². Even in his wildest moments he cared with tenderness for his daughter, and with concern for his wife. He hoped to leave no arrears before the last debt payable was settled.

¹ Cf. *Yorick’s Sentimental Journey, to which is prefixed Some Account of the Life of Mr Sterne*, by Eugenius (1774), p. 186.

² The writer has seen a copy of this rare print, indorsed with Walpole’s writing

CHAPTER XVII

THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNAL (ELIZA DRAPER : JANUARY 1767
TO JANUARY 1768)

“TERRITORY of Anjengo, what art thou? But thou art the spot where Eliza first drew breath.” So rhapsodised the blatant¹ Raynal, who was to step into Sterne’s shoes as Mrs Draper’s eulogist. Through her association with Yorick, heightened afterwards by an Indian elopement, Eliza Draper became a romantic heroine. Officers enshrined her dwelling-places, and her name still lingers in Anglo-Indian story. She affords one more instance of the glamour reflected on women by men of genius. Would Laura ever have been heard of except for Petrarch; or Fiammetta except for Boccaccio; or Sacharissa except for Waller; or Vanessa except for Swift; or Lady Hamilton save for Nelson and Romney? Yet most of these were far stronger personalities than Eliza. As portrayed in her own letters,² she was little more than an expansive and hysterical girl, condemned to an ill-assorted marriage and eager to surmount fate by courting notice. She avows herself a “woman of sentiment” with a “muse-like apprehension,” while she laments the

¹ So Gibbon thought him

² Cf especially Eliza Draper to Mrs James, Bombay, 15th April 1772, Add. MSS 34,527, ff 47-70, and the letter written on the eve of her elopement to her husband, in January 1773, and printed in the *Times of India* (Overland issue), 3rd March 1894

supporting and caressing hand, for an admirer, if possible illustrious, who might prove her friend and guardian. Boswell was not more bent on annexing heroes than she on attaching herself to a mentor. She was ready-made for the sentiment which Sterne had set going ; and Sterne, if he resembled his Uncle Toby in nothing else, resembled him in this, that he “eternally beckoned to the unfortunate to come and take shelter under him” At least so he did now in Bond Street.

Sterne first met her in the early January of 1767, at the Gerrard Street house of Commodore James and his wife Anne, who had lately become intimates. They were affluent and amiable ; but they did not move in the circles where his wit usually shone, and they looked up to him not only as a man of fame, but as a sprig of fashion, who was now hand in glove with the Duke of York. Their connections—Newnhams and the like : those Newnhams who were to furnish the Prince of Wales’s alderman-champion in Parliament—lay cityward, and when Sterne procured tickets for Madam Corneilly’s assemblies at Carlisle House, Mrs James was enchanted. Softer *traits*, too, fastened their regard. Sterne found a likeness in their little daughter to his darling Lydia. He shared Mrs James’s artistic tastes ; he unbosomed himself of his woes ; he lived on pity, and his plight now seemed pitiable indeed. If what Eliza afterwards heard from independent witnesses holds good—and Sterne confirmed it—his violent wife had declined on drink, and was now even seeking to estrange his daughter.¹ He

Science, Wit, and Reason with those masculine Rulers, and that they do possess it is rather owing to their usurped authority as legislators than to any superiority from the point of natural advantages, those of strength and courage excepted”

¹ Cf Mrs Draper’s letters to Mrs James of the 15th April 1772, Add MSS 34,527, ff 47-70 —

“The widow, I was assured, was occasionally a drinker, a swearer though in point of understanding and finished address supposed to be inferior to no Woman in Europe” In another part, however, of the same

figured himself as an exile, another Ovid, amid barbarians ignorant of his griefs and language. If the Commodore welcomed the genius, his wife pitied the martyr. Her friendship with Sterne was close—so close that, had not Eliza intervened, it is possible that she might have taken her place. But Mrs James was Eliza's confidante, she felt for the delicate girl who pined like a fading lily, and was fast resolving to prolong her absence from a climate and husband alike repugnant. While the Commodore dozed over pamphlets, she and Eliza would trill their songs and mingle their tears—a dangerous atmosphere, Sterne's very own. No sooner had he breathed it than the mischief was done. Eliza was a sweet, injured Indian. He would be her teacher, monitor, and defender. He styled himself her "Bramin", she should be his "Bramine". He told her that she and his Lydia were the true children of his heart. He exhorted her to "lean her whole weight" upon him and she would not regret it. He assured her that the motives of his zeal could not be misread, even by her husband. He trained her mind, he aided her accomplishments, and especially he loved to hear her sing a ditty with the refrain of "I'm lost, I'm lost"¹. He flattered and encouraged her correspondence by asking whence she derived her art of writing "so sweetly," and by jesting that, if his fortunes dwindled, he would print her letters as the "Finished Essays of an Unfortunate Young Indian Lady". He displayed himself in his favourite blend of father, guardian, and platonic admirer. He told her that he would be more a friend to her than she was to herself, he adopted her into the family of his feelings. In every way he sought to steal into her heart, by extolling its communication she says that Lydia had written in a letter, which Eliza deploras, that "her father sometimes misrepresented her mother in order to justify his neglect of her", but "is this daughterly?" she adds.

¹ Cf. *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775), p. 88. And for his other statements cf. *ibid* *passim*.

virtues and suggesting that only a sentimental breast could interpret hers. But all this he did spontaneously, with an actor's feeling. The stage of his adoration was as natural to him as the words of his part. Still, it was an old, old story. He had done the same before ; had he lived, he would have done the same again. And if it has been objected that in his Journal he repeats the words of his earliest love-letters, it has been forgotten that not only there, but in his correspondence with Eliza, he repeats the actions also. The play of his sentiment had habitual phases, which he could not help re-enacting, because they proceeded from the fanciful phantoms to which he accommodated the real women whom he met. He learned them from no prompt-book ; they came unbidden, and he knew no other process.

In his letters to Eliza, Sterne dwells on the features which most drew him towards his heroine. No doubt, he identified her with the "Cordelia" of his dreams. She was not beautiful ; but the pale oval of her face—the most "perfect," he said, that he ever saw—and the soulfulness of her eyes made amends. A simplicity there was about her bearing, that made him call her "Simplicia," and, above all, she was interesting ; she vibrated to his touch—in that her chief charm resided. Sterne liked her least in her gala-trappings, and he has contrasted the two aspects as shown in a portrait which he drew of her, and in another limned by their mutual friend. He courted the graces of her mind :—"I have just returned from our dear Mrs James's, where I have been talking of thee for three hours.—She has got your picture, and likes it. . . . Some other judges agree that mine is the better, and expressive of a sweet character, but what is that to the original ! Yet I acknowledge that hers is a picture for the world, and mine is calculated only to please a very sincere friend, or sentimental philosopher ; in the one you are dressed in smiles and with all the advan-

tages of silks, pearls and ermine,—in the other, simple as a vestal—appearing the good girl Nature made you, which to me conveys an idea of more unaffected sweetness than Mrs Draper habited for conquest in a birthday suit, with her countenance animated and her dimples visible. If I remember right, Eliza, you endeavoured to collect every charm of your person into your face with more than common care the day you sat for Mrs James—Your colour, too, brightened, and your eyes shone with more than usual brilliancy. I then requested you to come simple and unadorned when you sat for me—knowing (as I see with unprejudiced eyes) that you could receive no addition from the silk-worm's aid or jeweller's polish. Let me now tell you a truth, which I believe I have uttered before—When I first saw you, I beheld you as an object of compassion, and as a very plain woman. The mode of your dress (tho' fashionable) disfigured you—but nothing now could render you such, but the being solicitous to make yourself admired as a handsome one—you are not handsome, Eliza, nor is yours a face that will please the tenth part of your beholders,—but you are something more, for I scruple not to tell you, I never saw so intelligent, so animated, so good a countenance, nor was there, (nor ever will be) that man of sense, tenderness, and feeling, in your company three hours, that was not (or will not be) your admirer, or would not be your friend, in consequence of it, that is if you assume no character foreign to your own, but appear the artless being Nature designed you for. A something in your eyes, and voice, you possess in a degree more persuasive than any woman I ever saw, read, or heard of. But it is that bewitching sort of nameless excellence that men of nice sensibility alone can be touched with ”¹

¹ Cf. *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775), pp. 60-3. Two lines of this passage have evidently been misprinted, and the text is here corrected.

Sterne's first approach repeated his first approach to Kitty. He sent her his sermons, which, he said, came "hot from the heart." His *Tristram*, which "came from the head," accompanied them. He knew not why, he added, but he was "half in love," and ought to be wholly so, for he never valued or saw more good qualities to value, or thought more of one of her sex than of Eliza. —"So, adieu."

And his next letter is like unto it. She suffered ; he could not rest till he knew how she was though he would call at half-past twelve —"May thy dear face smile as thou risest, like the sun of this morning." She had been ill ; he was alarmed, but a friend might claim the privilege of a physician. He had flattery to prescribe, for here it is that he brings in the "good old Lord Bathurst," and recalls his first introduction to him. Seven years had elapsed, yet Eliza now absorbed Sterne's converse with the sprightly patron of the Augustan age, who at eighty-five had "all the wit and promptness of the man of thirty, a disposition to be pleased, and a power to please others beyond whatever I knew." Nestor had blossomed into the "man of feeling." A most sentimental afternoon till nine o'clock had they passed. Thrice did they toast "the Star that conducted and enlivened the discourse." Was her adorer cheered ? Not in the least, it was not his way. —"Best of all girls, the sufferings I have sustained the whole night on account of thine, Eliza, are beyond my power of words. . . . Thou hast been bowed down, my child, with every burden that sorrow of heart and pain of body can inflict upon a poor being." But she must "hope everything," and she would yet enjoy a "spring of youth and cheerfulness." One wonders if Elizabeth's burdens ever afflicted Sterne like Eliza's. Distance lent no enchantment to Mrs Sterne.

Matters were marching indeed ! He sent his "Bramine"

an old epitaph of his own, adapted not to her case but to his dread of its contingencies —

“Columns, and labour’d urns but vainly show
An idle scene of decorated woe,
The sweet companion, and the friend sincere
Need no mechanic help to force the tear

In heartfelt numbers, never meant to shine,
’Twill flow eternal o’er a hearse like thine,
’Twill flow, whilst gentle goodness has one friend,
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend”

As for Eliza, the “Bramin’s” portrait hung over her writing-desk, an oracle for every doubt and difficulty And even ere “the roses” returned to her cheek, her husband, “if he is the good-feeling man I wish him,” would kiss her “pale, poor dejected face” with more transport than in the best bloom of her beauty If not, Sterne pitied him, and so, doubtless, did Eliza

It was a cruel fate Daniel’s fiat had gone forth, and she must be dragged to his Indian den The drooping victim was to sail in April on the long voyage that would remove her presence, but not her heart And yet acquaintances there were, base enough, wrote Sterne, to insinuate evil against her befriender He was half beside himself, and told one of the few untruths traceable in his career He warned her against the tattlers He said that Mrs James shared his own aversion, but this he afterwards acknowledged as a *ruse* To whom should the grass-widow turn, but to one who had her truest interests at heart? Her distresses are his He executes her commissions, he has been with “Zumps,” and the pianoforte will be tuned for her cabin The very pliers that he gets her will “vibrate sweet comfort” to his hopes Twelve “handsome brass screws to hang your necessities upon” he buys, two he

retains to bring her back to him at Coxwold. He instructs the Deal pilot; night and morning he shields the defenceless. Such was the "mild, good, generous Yorick," as Eliza knew him.¹

The nearer her departure, the more restive he grows. He counts over the sweets of their sentimental rambles. One whole day they had passed together, visiting the children at Salt Hill; for hours they had talked of themselves, and she had taught him the pigeon-English of Indian servants.² Bereft of her, as his Journal puts it, he would be left beholding the sad sunset of his life. Hitherto the refrains of his pathos had been soft arpeggios; their *piano* now quickened to *agitato* and *crescendo*. From all accounts, his wife lay dying, and years afterwards Eliza remembered that she too thought the same. Under similar circumstances, his first dallies with Kitty had culminated in the avowal that he loved her to distraction. And so it happened now, though on a larger scale, for his bout with Eliza came nearer to a genuine passion. Mrs Sterne had grown not only impossible, but grasping:—"My wife cannot live long—she has sold all the provinces in France already—and I know not the woman I should like so well for her substitute as yourself—'Tis true, I am ninety-five in constitution, and you but twenty-five—rather too great a disparity this! but what I want in youth I will make up in wit and good Humour. Not Swift so loved his Stella, Scarron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa as I will love and honour thee, my wife elect. All those names, eminent as they were, shall give place to thine, Eliza. Tell me, in answer to this, that you approve and honour the

¹ Cf Mrs Draper's letter to Mrs James, Add MSS 34,527, ff 47-70

² For the first of these facts cf the Journal transcribed at the end of this work, for the second, cf *Letters from Yorick to Eliza* (1775) "It can no be, Massa" And the phrase is repeated in a later part of the Journal

parental clothes, and Eliza revered his tender gravity. They arranged to exchange diaries, and he despatched a first portion of his Journal to the boat. This, like hers, has perished. Eliza doubtless burned it, fearing the publication that was to threaten her letters. But from the Sunday when she sailed (it was April the thirteenth), he resumed the record and desisted from corresponding.¹ With his usual *élan*, he soon surmounted the first attack. He even dined with Hall-Stevenson at the Brawn's Head, where "the whole pandemonium" of the brotherhood assembled. But, as soon, he relapsed, "worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most of all with fever of the heart, with which I am eternally wasting, and shall till I see Eliza"—"Great Controller of events, surely thou wilt proportion this to my strength, and to that of my Eliza." He passes all his time in reading her letters. He takes no pleasure in society or diversions. "What a change, my dear girl, thou madest in me!" She has turned the "tide" of his passions. "They flow, Eliza, to thee—and ebb from every object in this world—And reason tells me they do right—for my heart has rated them at a Price that all the world is not rich enough to purchase them from me at.—In a high fever all the night."

"So ill, so ill." He could not "totter out" to Mrs James. He sits gazing at Eliza's picture above his table. "Oh, my Bramine! my friend, my Helpmate—for that, if I am a prophet, is the lot marked out for thee. . . . Cordelia's spirit will fly to tell thee in some sweet slumber the moment the door is open for thee, and the Bramin of the valley shall follow the track whither it leads him, to get to his Eliza, and invite her to his cottage." Cordelia, it will be remembered, was his Nun, the successor and precursor of all his dreams. Clearly, he had imparted his cloister reverie,

¹ The Journal closes on 1st November. The previous excerpts come from his letters.

and in a subsequent part of the Journal he figures Eliza catching him in her arms at Cordelia's grave

Love-sickness, lung-sickness, beset him, and after his wont he strikes the same old strings, while he exhibits the same old spelling We are back once more in the Cottage d'Estella Yet was this iteration mere stock-in-trade? Rather it seems the natural mechanism of his natural outlets, the monotone of self-pity and its transference to others None the less Mrs Sterne can hardly have been pleased, when, after his death, she compared parts of the diary with the old effusions of his courtship Some coincidences are so remarkable as to have prompted a guess that Lydia, who edited his first love-letters (with a comment that they did him honour), concocted some of them out of this very "Journal"¹ He eats his "chicking," "sitting over my repast upon it with tears—a bitter sauce—Eliza! but I could eat it with no other When Molly spread the table cloath my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate—one knife, one fork—one glass! Oh, Eliza, 'twas painfully distressing—I gave a thousand pensive penetrating looks on the arm-chair thou so often graced on those quiet sentimental Repasts—and I sighed and laid down my knife and fork,—took out my handkerchief and clapped it across my face and wept like a child—I shall read the same affecting account of many a sad dinner wch Eliza has had no power to taste and from the same feelings of recollection how she and her Bramin had eat their bread in Peace and Love together!" The Bramin loves the lotus-flower of the Ganges

When at last he could get out, it is to Mrs James he

¹ There is reason, however, to believe otherwise The first of Sterne's love letters to his wife is cited as genuine in the *Archivist and Autograph Review*, vols. i and iii (March 1888 and 1890), nor have they ever been really doubted.

drives. He brings her painting materials, but their colours are washed away in tears. "Long conversations about thee, my Eliza." "Sunk my heart with an infamous account of Draper and his detested character at Bombay. For what a wretch art thou hazarding thy life, my dear friend, and what thanks is his nature capable of returning!—Thou wilt be repaid by injuries and Insults! Still there is a blessing in store for the meek and gentle, and Eliza will not be disinherited of it. Her Bramin is kept alive by this hope only—otherwise he is so sunk both in spirits and looks, Eliza would scarce know him again." And yet a few months later he drafted a letter to that marital monster, calmly proposing his permission for Eliza's exeat, and a platonic holiday at Coxwold.¹ Quit his roof she did, but with another, after Sterne was dead, and long after his maunderings had left her cold.

The sickliest moonbeams brood over this sentimental journal. Sterne owns that he begins "to feel a pleasure in this kind of resigned misery arising from that situation of heart unsupported by aught but its own tenderness—Thou owest me much, Eliza!—and I will have patience, for thou wilt pay me all." He tracks her journey. He sends for "a chart of the Atlantic Ocean—O! 'tis but a little way off—and I could venture after it in a Boat methinks. . . . But Fate has chalked out other routes for us. We must go on with many a weary step, each in the separate heartless track, till Nature——." He buys Orme's history of British India; he constantly communes with her picture and Mrs James, who duplicates the bygone tears of Miss Lumley's friend. When he sets up his carriage, he laments that Eliza cannot share it. His "ardour" overpowers him, he dissolves in compassion.—" 'Tis the language of Love and I can speak no other."—"Poor, sick-headed, sick-hearted Yorick!"—

¹ Cf Add. MSS 34,527 (Gibbs Papers) Professor Cross, who draws attention to this document, thinks that it was never forwarded.

Eliza has made a "shadow" of him—and a bore. And then afresh he betakes himself to his bed with a raging fever, caused, he would have her believe, by these heart-pangs. A prophetic spirit, he avers, had inspired him with Trim's anguish for the fair "Beguine." He breaks another vessel, the blood mingles with his tears, and the doctors assign a cause for his malady which shocks while it amuses him. Yet he retails it all, not only to Eliza, but afterwards in a published letter to Lord Shelburne. No detail is too minute (or gross) for him to notice. Gradually he mends, but he does not mend his manner. The spirit of Eliza cheers him more than "all the lectures of philosophy" (whatever those may have been) she, she alone, soothes all his "little fears and *may-be's*." It is the seventh day that he has tasted nothing but water-gruel. Hall has persuaded him to eat a "boiled fowl,"—"so he dines with me on it—and a dish of Mackereels." Needless to say that Sterne drinks "everlasting Peace and Happiness" to Eliza's name. His "poor pulse quickened," his "pale face glowed," and tears "stood ready" in his eyes "to fall upon the paper" as he "traced the word Eliza." The doctors stroke their beards and look "ten per cent wiser." He is to run through a course of Van Sweeten's corrosive mercury, or rather Van Sweeten's course of corrosive mercury "is to run through" him. He will be "sublimated," he sighs, to some ethereal substance by the time his Eliza sees him, but he was ever, he adds, "transparent and a Being easy to be seen through."

There is little to relieve these nauseous pages, yet as he recovers, calling upon her name, the close examiner may find a trace. He has been ordered the cure of Montpellier once more. That word appears to arouse associations and to sharpen the contrast between his rasping wife and the new-found comforter. For he makes Molly, the maid-

Remember thee—Whilst memory holds a seat in this distracted world—Remember thee—Yes, from the Table of her memory shall just Eliza wipe away all trivial men and leave a throne for Yorick.”

The second of June has a surprise in store. A letter from Lydia lies on his table; “she and her Mama” announce their intention of visiting Coxwold, and his outburst had best speak for itself:—“But on condition I promise not to detain them in England beyond next April—when they purpose, by my consent, to retire into France and establish themselves for life. To all of which I have freely given my parole of Honour and so shall have them with me for the summer—From October to April they take lodgings in York, when they leave me for good and all, I suppose—Everything for the best, Eliza. This unexpected visit is neither a visit of friendship or form—but ’tis a visit such as I know *you* would never make me of pure Interest to pillage what they can from me. In the first place to sell a small estate I have of 60 pds. a year—and lay out the purchase money in joint annuities for them in the French Funds; by this they will obtain 200 pds. a year to be continued to the longer Liver—and as it rids me of all future care, and simply transfers their income to the kingdom where they purpose to live—I am truly acquiescent—though I lose the contingency of surviving them—but ’tis no matter, I shall have enough and a hundred or two hundred Pounds for Eliza whenever she will honour me by putting her hand into my purse.—In the mean time I am not sorry for this visit as everything will be finally settled between us by it—only as their annuity will be too strait—I shall engage to remit them a hundred guineas a year more, during my wife’s life—and then I will think, Eliza, of living for myself and the Being I love as much.—But I shall be pillaged in a hundred small items by them, which I have a spirit above

saying *No*—to , as provisions of all sorts of linens—for house use—body use—printed linens for gowns, Magassines of Teas Plate, all I have (but six silver spoons)—in short I shall be plucked bare—all but of your portrait and snuff box, and other dear presents—and the neat furniture of my thatched Palace, and upon these I set up stock again, Eliza ” Altogether, a nice pickle for a man of sentiment !

Sterne did not leave Mrs Draper two hundred pounds Was it for this that, in a spasm of rage against his wife and daughter, his “idolater” branded her Yorick after his death as “tainted with the vices of injustice, meanness, and folly” ?¹ Or was wounded vanity her motive ? Yet, if so, why should she have come to sanction the publication of his letters to herself ? Sterne’s indignation presents no such difficulties , his wife was extravagant and rapacious But broken nerves and a craving for pity exaggerated his annoyance , nor but for these would he ever have included the daughter of his heart in his pettish diatribes When she departed and Sterne presented her with a ten-pound note, she made such a pretty speech of generous refusal, and with such a pretty *moue*, that he burst into applauding tears

They came , Lydia without her rouge-pot, against which Sterne had cautioned his “child of nature” But when they came, it may be questioned whether they quite appreciated Yorick’s preparations Shandy Hall was transformed He had fitted up a snug sanctuary for Eliza in his “thatched Palace,” while he prudently secreted the document which depicts it And they must have marked a change not only in the house but its owner Sterne’s jottings portray him at his morbidest, and though his brain was unimpaired it may be feared that his nerves were softening Well might he moralise “What is Wisdom

¹ Cf Eliza’s long letter to Mrs James from Bombay, of 15th April 1772 Add. MSS 34,527, ff 47-70

the more with me — You lie, Solomon ! answered Sheba, for I know the cause already—and am so little out of charity with you upon it that I give you leave to come and drink Tea with me before you leave town — You're a good honest Creature, Sheba — No ! you rascal, I am not But I am in Love as much as you can be for your Life — I am glad of it, Sheba, said I — You lie, said she, and so cantered away " So does his frivolity, though Eliza must be impressed And then falls the inevitable tear — " Oh, my Eliza, had I ever truly loved another (wch I never did) thou has long ago cut the root of all affection in me—and planted and watered and nourished it to bear fruit only for thyself " The Bramin, too, reasserts himself Is he not her mentor ? " Respect thyself " had been the counsel of his letters , " Be true to thyself " is his prescription now

Three weeks later he packs up for Coxwold, "detained by Lord and Lady Spencer, who had made a party to dine and sup on my account", but he longs for "loneliness" — "There the mind, Eliza, gains strength and learns to lean upon herself and seeks refuge in its own Constancy and Virtue In the world it seeks or accepts of a few treacherous supports The vain compassion of one—the flattery of a second—the civilities of a third—the friendship of a fourth—they all deceive and bring the mind back to where mine is retreating—that is, Eliza, to its Queen, to thee, who art my second self—to retirement—reflection and books " We seem to hear his sermons over again And so he goes next morning and stays two days on the road at the Archbishop of York's, where he must needs hand round his Bramine's miniature to the assembled party It is a queer episode, this archiepiscopal blessing on Eliza's friendship The journey tires him, as the Journal tires us He gets to bed so emaciated that Eliza would scarce remember him — "Alas, poor Yorick ! Remember thee ! Pale Ghost—

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¹ Cf Eliza’s long letter to Mrs James from Bombay, of 15th April 1772 Add. MSS 34,527, ff 47-70.

to a foolish weak heart like mine ! 'tis like the sound of melody to the broken spirit." But the "broken spirit" still kept a post-chaise with "a couple of fine horses" to muse on his lost companion as he rolled along, and could incur expenses for his unseen idol's temple :—

"I have this week finished a sweet little apartment, which at the times of doing I flattered the most delicious of ideas in thinking I was making it for you—A neat little simple elegant room, overlooked only by the sun—just big enough to hold a Sopha for us—a table, 4 chairs, a Bureau and a Book case.—They are to be all yours, room and all. And there, Eliza, shall I enter ten times a day and give the testimonies of my devotion—Wast thou this moment sat down in it, it would be the sweetest of earthly tabernacles. I shall enrich it from time to time for thee—till Fate lets me lead thee by the hand into it—and then it can want no ornament.—'Tis a little oblong room, with a large Sash at the end—a little elegant fireplace—with as much room to dine around it as in Bond Street, but in sweetness and simplicity and silence beyond anything. Oh, my Eliza !—I shall see thee surely Goddess of this Temple and a most sovereign one of all I have—and of all the powers heaven has trusted me with.—They were lent me, Eliza ! Only for thee—and for thee, my dear Girl, they shall be kept and employed.—You know what Rights you have over me—Wish to heaven I could convey the grant more amply than I have done—But 'tis all the same—'Tis registered where it will longest last." It is the old, visionary Sterne, and he seeks a purring sympathy from his cat !

His "Reverie of the Nuns," the key-note of the past, runs through all these ravings. And Eliza is now merged in the Cordelia whose "convent" he revisits. How characteristic of Sterne ! How divergent from his contemporaries is this ghost-land of imagination, investing

trifles with dim significance, importing both the past and the future into his daily round! Something of the old magic still clings to his magnifying-glass "I have returned," he writes, "from a delicious walk, my Bramine, which I am to tread a thousand times over with you swinging on my arm I have plucked up a score of Bryers by the roots which grew near the edge of the way that they might not scratch or incommode you—Had I been sure of your taking that walk with me the very next day I could not have been more serious in my employment—Dear enthusiasm, thou bringst things forward in a moment that Time keeps for ages back—I have you ten times a day beside me—I talk to my Eliza for hours together, I take your Council I hear your reasons and I admire you for them! To this magic of a warm Mind I owe all that is worth living for during the state of our trial"

A touch of falsetto protrudes, but there is pathos too in the drawn-out whimpers of this chronicle It is not all mawkish Sterne was at the height of his fame, yet in the depths of his despair It was a year of homage to his genius Lord Spencer, he notes, had "loaded" him with "a grand Escritoire of forty guineas" From Paris he was to receive a gift of equal value, a fine gold snuff-box with an "inscription on it more valuable than the box itself" There was a portrait, "worth them both," which he boasts to have immortalised in his *Sentimental Journey* There were six beautiful marbles of the sculptures upon "poor Ovid's tomb," the bard "who died in exile though he wrote so well upon the Art of Love" There were Eliza's presents, the "gold Stock Buckle and Buttons," rated "above rubies because they were consecrated by the hand of friendship, as she fitted them to me" He was offered preferment both in Ireland and Surrey, and there was an American present, omitted from the diary *Tristram Shandy* had humour-

esqued the two "handles" displayed by every living creature. In pursuance of this whimsy a Dr Eustace of North Carolina forwarded a two-handled walking-stick, with an enthusiastic letter. Sterne was greatly touched, and returned a fitting compliment. Nor was he less to appreciate the homage paid to his humanity by a grateful negro, Ignatius Sancho. Above all, he naturally prized most the dubious gift of Eliza's heart—"So finely set, with such rich materials and workmanship that Nature must have had the chief hand in it. If I am able to keep it I shall be a rich man. If I lose it, I shall be poor indeed—So poor that I shall stand begging at your gates." Yet all this time the bond between them was brittle. Eliza, renowned, had younger fish to hook, and Sterne begged at every gate where compassion stood almoner.

It is a relief to find him in a vaunting mood. He was not unconscious of his power :—"I have brought your name, Eliza, and picture into my work—where they will remain when you and I are at rest for ever. Some annotator, or explainer of my works will take occasion to speak of the friendship which subsisted so long and faithfully betwixt Yorick and the Lady he speaks of—Her name, he will tell the world, was Draper—a native of India—married there to a gentleman in the India Service of that name, who brought her over to England for the recovery of her health in the year '65—where she continued till April in the year 1767. It was about three months before her return to India that our Author's acquaintance and hers began. Mrs Draper had a great thirst for knowledge—was handsome, genteel and engaging—and of such gentle disposition and so enlightened an understanding that Yorick (whether he met much opposition is not known) from an acquaintance soon became her Admirer.—They caught fire at each other at the same time and they would often say, without reserve

to the world, and without any idea of anything *wrong* in it, that their affections for each other were unbounded—Mr Draper dying in the year , his lady returned to England And Yorick, the year after becoming a widower—they were married—and retiring to one of his livings in Yorkshire where was a most romantic situation, they lived and died happily—and are spoke of with honour in the parish to this day ” And other dreams floated before him They would fly to Florence “Arno’s Vale” would “look gay again upon Eliza’s visit,” while “the companion of her journey” would “grow young as” he “sits upon her banks with Eliza seated beside” him The dramatis personæ alone failed the performance “the play is wrote—the scenes are painted and the curtain ready to be drawn up The whole piece waits for thee ”

Nicely settled ! But the curtain was to rise on none of these anticipations , rather, it was to fall on the illusions of a lifetime Yet how contradictory are this man’s moods ! No sooner does he find that letters to his wife miscarry than he is pained “because it has the aspect of an unreasonable unkindness to take no notice of what has the appearance at least of a civility in desiring to pay me a visit—My daughter, besides, has not deserved it of me—and though her mother has, I would not ungenerously take that opportunity which would most overwhelm her to give any mark of my resentment I have besides long since forgiven her and am more inclined now as she proposes a plan whereby I shall never more be disquieted ” Nor is the contrast less visible hereafter Even while he softens towards his wife, he tells Eliza how “merciless” his neighbours think her He is a bundle of sensations

And regrets are diversified by his old vagaries He consorts with Lord Fauconberg, he flies off to Crazy Castle (how Hall-Stevenson must have laughed at him !), to Harro-

gate, to the York races, to God knows where ; hawking about Eliza's miniature, which he was to show even to Lord Shelburne, and parading his stricken heart. No sooner does he return than he sits down in his land of plenty, surrounded by venison, strawberries and cream ; entertaining his "Cousin Antony." Other days, other moods. When his wife's "unfeeling" communications vex him, he fasts, but finds fresh solace in setting up "a sweet Pavillion" in a retired corner of his garden for the woman who symbolises his nerves. She is the centre of all his negotiations with Mrs Sterne, and their issue tranquillises him. The wife and "dear Girl" stayed two months with him before they wintered at York, and his compact with the former was concluded. She would retire into Southern France and remain there. Never, she vowed, would she occasion another sorrowful or discontented hour. She "has been conquered," he boasts, "by humanity and generosity." He promised to allow her three hundred guineas a year, while he gladly bestowed two thousand pounds on his daughter. The sums are large, and the three thousand pounds derived from his works would scarcely have sufficed, had it not been for his land-jobbing at Stillington. Though he was to die some seven hundred pounds in debt, he was not a Yorkshireman for nothing. Shrewdly enough he deplores his wife's resolve to sink Lydia's portion in French annuities. That wife is "half in love" with him when she leaves. The barometer is set fair, and his hysteria subsides.

All this time he worked feverishly at the *Sentimental Journey*. He overtaxed his strength—fresh spittings of blood ensued with their usual remedy, a flying visit to London. This happened in November ; it was short but stirring, for all his grand friends flocked round him. Though Sterne knew everyone from Chatham to Wilkes and

seems to have scintillated everywhere, he figures less in social records than any personage of his century. A certain shyness in big assemblies has been noted, and Sterne was a man who only unbosomed himself to women. He could not face the world, though he wished a woman to smooth his pillow. Yet during these few weeks he did not visit Mrs James, who felt hurt at his neglect. He wrote a letter of excuses. Does it ring true? Perhaps it does. Whither could the prodigal more gladly have turned than to Gerrard Street, had health and engagements permitted? Perhaps its associations were too recent and painful for his lacerated nerves. He sought fresh distractions. New friends had been added to old, among others young Arthur Lee and Sir William Stanhope. "Praised be God for my sensibility," he wrote to the latter, but the sensibility, once so buoyant, was fast killing a diseased dotard.

Bond Street saw him for the last time in January when he came up to arrange the publication of his work. Lydia and Mrs Sterne waited in England till the book appeared in February, and Sterne was to yearn bitterly for their presence at the last. Short and evil were the few days remaining. He indulged in his old transports, he wrapped round him his old robe of injured innocence, but the mantle had worn out, and its tatters revealed much that its wearer could never realise or confess. He had fed on feeling too long.

There is a sadness in such an end quite distinct from ruin or solitude. Sterne could not be called bankrupt or forsaken, but, throughout, he had forsaken himself and made a bankruptcy of emotion. He could now draw on nothing but his dreams—implacable bankers dishonouring his bills. The mirage had vanished.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAST GASP

(FEBRUARY 26 TO MARCH 18, 1768 : THE SEQUELS)

THE *Sentimental Journey* convulsed London, and even Sterne's enemies owned it innocent. The un-English wit of it, at once pert and piercing, started a vogue ; a conventional society could only draw out its pocket-handkerchief and weep. More than ever Yorick was fêted, yet as a "ghost" he partook of those banquets : the expression is his own. He delighted in acquainting great folks like Lord Ossory and George Selwyn with his Eliza's Jameses ; he hoped to introduce Lord Shelburne. He had made acquaintance with the Duke of Queensberry, that Restoration voluptuary who never grew old, though "old Q" was to be his *sobriquet*. He saw much of Mrs Montagu whom Eliza worshipped.¹ But this last struggle with his body proved too much for his spirit. An epidemic of influenza set in, and Sterne caught it as easily as the town caught his sentiment. He kept to his room. He wrote to Mrs James and his daughter. His dearest wish was that Eliza's friend should protect the girl from her headstrong mother, and that one day his Lydia and Eliza might be sisters. It had been rumoured that he would bequeath her to the fair Indian. This was untrue. His

¹ When Mrs Montagu's book on Shakespeare appeared in 1769, Eliza wrote with rapture of it to Mrs James. Cf the long letter before cited

Gerrard Street hostess was to have been the legatee — “No, my Lydia!” he wrote, “’tis a lady whose virtues I wish thee to imitate that I shall entrust my girl to—I mean that friend whom I have so often talked and wrote you about—From her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother and a sincere friend And you cannot be intimate with her without her pouring some part of the milk of human kindness into your breast, which will serve to check the heat of your own temper Nor will that amiable woman put my Lydia under the painful necessity to fly from England for protection whilst it is in her power to grant her a more powerful one in England” Mrs Sterne had been venting her tempers on her daughter because of these rumours, though while she was still abroad, she had repelled with dignity those who accused Sterne of Eliza He must have remembered this in continuing his letter —“I think, my Lydia, that thy mother will survive me—do not deject her spirits with thy professions on my account—I have sent you a necklace, buckles, and the same to your mother—my girl cannot form a wish that is in the power of her father that he will not gratify her in and I cannot in justice be less kind to thy mother I am never alone, the kindness of my friends as ever the same—I wish, tho’, I had thee to nurse me—but I am deny’d that—Write to me twice a week, at least—God bless thee, my child, and believe me ever, ever, thy affectionate father” He promised to meet her in May

At first he rallied Mrs Montagu sent him remedies which, he thought, revived him “I am absolutely this morning free,” he wrote to her, “from every bodily distemper that is to be read of in the catalogue of human infirmities, and know I shall not be able to delay paying you my thanks in person longer than till tomorrow noon, if you are visible, as the French say I follow no

regimen but *strict Temperance*, and so am, with all sense of your goodness, dear Madame, your affectionate cosin."¹

But he was rash as usual. In the first fortnight of March pleurisy supervened, and his case grew serious. Friends crowded to his bedside ; the great carriages drove incessantly to the wig-maker's above whose shop Yorick lay dying. The Jameses were seldom absent ; he was "never alone." For a moment he still hoped to recover and to complete his sittings for the third portrait which Sir Joshua attempted, and which may possibly have given Sterne his *coup de grâce*² The beginning of his end was not lonely, though after his death it was babbled otherwise. Nor, though hampered, were his finances crippled : the proceeds of his book flowed in. But his strength was ebbing, and the dance of his spirits no longer availed him. For the closing nine days he saw no one, and he took up his pen for the last time to write to Mrs James. The letter is headed Tuesday, which was the eighth of March. His faculties were clear, and his one thought was for his daughter. Her he again recommended to the lady of his heart and Eliza's .—"Your poor friend is scarce able to write ; he has been at death's door this week with a pleurisy—I was bled three times on Thursday and blistered on Friday. The physician says I am better—God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while gaining strength. Before I have gone thro' half this letter I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times. Mr James was so good as to call upon me yesterday—I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him ; and he overjoyed me by talking a great deal of you.—Do, dear Mrs James,

¹ This letter, kindly offered by its owner, comes from Mr Broadley's autograph collection. It is undated, but tradition assigns it to a very short time before his death.

² He had sat for him on 22nd February and 1st March. Cf the reference to Reynolds's Pocket-Book for 1768, given by Professor Cross in his *Life*, p 460.

entreat him to come tomorrow or next day, for perhaps I have not many days or hours to live—I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself worse—that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror—My spirits are fled,—’tis a bad omen—Do not weep, my dear Lady—Your tears are too precious to shed for me—Bottle them up and may the cork never be drawn! Dearest, kindest, gentlest, and best of women, may health, peace and happiness prove your handmaids!—If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemned—which my heart, not my head, betrayed me into¹ Should my child, my Lydia, want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom?—You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action—I wrote to her a fortnight ago and told her what I trust she will find in you—Mr James will be a father to her—He will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence—Commend me to him as I now commend you to that Being who takes under His care the good and kind above all the world—Adieu—all grateful thanks to you and Mr James—Your affectionate friend, L. Sterne”

Sterne never shrank from death. In one place he dwells on the uncertainty of its shape, in another on his desire to die alone at some inn, though elsewhere he yearns for near and dear ones to tend his death-bed. The Bond Street lodging was not a home, and all but the last of these wishes were gratified. His exit is more dramatic than Le Fevre’s. On Friday, the eighteenth of March, a number of Sterne’s friends dined together in Clifford

¹ It is curious that Heine’s apology in his will should so much resemble Sterne’s

Street with John Crawford of Erroll, his old companion. There were the Dukes of Queensberry and Grafton; there were the Earls of March and Upper Ossory—the latter an ally of standing; there was Garrick, to whom he had sent his first books; his Paris acquaintance Hume; and the inseparable James. Almost every period of his life was represented. The talk turned on Yorick's illness, which none could believe fatal. And when the truth leaked out, their host instantly asked John Macdonald, a cadet of Sir James's clan then in his service, to go out and inquire. He went. The mistress opened the door; she told Macdonald to seek the nurse in the sick-room. He watched him die. Ten minutes he waited; but in five, Sterne gasped, "*Now it is come.*" He put up his hand as if to ward a blow, and expired. The masquerader had quitted the ballroom.¹

Ossory proceeded to Lady Mary Coke, who much "lamented" Yorick, while the Earl of Eglington, who was present at her party, said that the last sentimental journey had been taken. But an unsentimental journey was in store, nor had Sterne ended his adventures with his breath.

Becket, the bookseller, and Commodore James attended his funeral in the new Bayswater burial-ground of St George's, Hanover Square. Nor was a memorial erected till 1780, when "two Brother Masons" (whose masonry was probably the free craft of Crazy Castle) set up a headstone with a rhymed inscription in honour of the humourist—"By Fools insulted, and by Prudes accused." Three days after the interment—and Hall-Stevenson is our witness—his body was snatched by the graveyard highwaymen who then abounded. It was sold for dissection, some say at

¹ Cf John Macdonald's own account in his *Travels* (pp 146-7), cited by Professor Cross in his *Life*, p 461



JULIA STERNE DE MEDALLE.

STERNE'S DAUGHTER WITH HER FATHER'S BUST.
From the original engraving in her edition of his letters.

Oxford, others at Cambridge, where tradition runs that his features were recognised. One can scarcely pass that cemetery without a shudder. What an epilogue to sentiment, and what a peg whereon Yorick might have hung his moral! Thenceforward Sterne has been the prey of dissectors. It has been the aim of this imperfect book to present him more as Sir Joshua might have done in his interrupted likeness—to give his inner core, the fantasy which fed on dreams, the nerve-quivers that unfitted him for any action but his shadow-dance of sensation. Even the women who responded (or corresponded) to it seem nebulous—mere palpitations of his feeling.

To body-snatching, book-snatching succeeded. Sterne proved a treasure for literary thieves. "Was ever anything so *unreasonably* reasonable as Yorick's pathetic wit?"—such was the verdict of his reviewers¹. Imitations and impostures shot into notice. His wife and daughter hurried from Angoulême to stop this traffic, and ply their own. They seemed to have stayed with Mrs James, their perpetual helper. After settling his estate and selling his books and china, they searched his manuscripts. Unprinted sermons—the sweepings of his study, as Sterne termed them—were pushed into publicity, only to betray the worst instance of his plagiarism². They wished to continue his *Sentimental Journey*, and Hall-Stevenson made a futile effort. Above all, they turned to Wilkes, now a political prisoner, to collaborate with "Cousin Antony" in a memoir and collected edition of his works, which Lydia even designed to illustrate. But somehow this project fell

¹ Cf *Monthly Review* for March 1768, pp. 174, 185.

² A whole passage about being "born unto trouble" from Walter Leightonhouse, a seventeenth-century prebendary of Lincoln. Cf Professor Cross's *Life*, pp. 476-7.

through : Stevenson was too "lazy,"¹ nor was Wilkes over eager. The widow and her daughter needed support ; for, despite the annuity, which may have been mortgaged, they were both in straits : and the lord of Crazy Castle collected as much as eight hundred pounds for them at the ensuing York races. Their poverty made them stoop to shifts. They tried to set Dodsley and Becket in competition and to break contracts in doing so. Above all, they threatened to publish Sterne's correspondence with Eliza. The infuriated Mrs Draper did not protest from across the sea in vain ; the publication was stopped, but Eliza had to pay a price. Thenceforward she abominated the Sternes, though she admitted to Mrs James that some of her surmises were baseless, and, in 1775, herself permitted the issue of Yorick's letters. She had done more than this : she dispatched a certain Colonel Campbell for the express purpose of marrying Lydia ; she still proffered her protection. And the vanity of her sentimentalism was unbounded. If she "loved once," she wrote, or "gave her love at all," she "gave ALL." In the January of 1773 she eloped from her husband in the ship of Sir John Clark, and took refuge with an appreciative uncle.

When the Sternes resought their French asylum in 1769, they were content, diverting themselves and trifling, wrote Lydia, with the muses. An ill-scanned couplet of hers may serve as a specimen —

"Thus wisely careless, innocently gay,
We play the trifle, life, away."²

Time passed. Mrs Sterne's health and habits deteriorated, and in the autumn of 1770 they moved southward to

¹ Cf Lydia's letter to Wilkes, Add MSS 30,877, ff 70-5 Stevenson, however, did supply a brief prefatory memoir to his continuation of the *Journey*

² Cf *ibid*

Albi, near their old hunting-ground of Toulouse Lydia maintained that shallow pertness which Eliza was to find alluring¹ In the spring of 1772 she turned Catholic on her marriage with Jean Baptiste Alexandre de Medalle, a young man of good connections, but five years her junior The records of the place illuminate both Lydia's character and her wedding, for, in Sheridan's words, "they do say there were pressing reasons for it"

In 1775 she and her mother revisited England for the purpose of publishing Sterne's letters Wilkes may have aided her, just as at the same time he seems to have assisted Eliza in editing *Yorick's* For Eliza, too, had returned, and both ladies besieged the demagogue with flattering disclaimers of literary ability² Sterne's daughter professed an unwillingness to trust her pen, Eliza deprecated and withheld her own letters Surely Mrs Draper and Madame de Medalle must now have met and been reconciled

The sequel is tragic Mrs Sterne had again to be treated in a doctor's house, where she expired soon after her daughter's marriage The Medalles had an only child, a son, who died in 1781 at the Benedictine School of Sorèze Ere then Lydia herself had departed Eliza closed her days in 1788, and rests in Bristol Cathedral, where Burke and Raynal visited her monument Little more than a decade after Sterne's death his nearest connections had perished, and with his boy grandson the stock of Shandy became extinct

¹ Cf her long letter to Mrs James, Add MSS 34,527, ff 47-70 "Miss Sterne is supposed to have a portion of each parents' best Qualities—the sensibility and frolicsome vivacity of Yorick most happily blended in her composition—lively by Nature, Youth and Education, she cannot fail to please every freak of the captious man"

² For Eliza's letter to Wilkes cf Add MSS 30,875, f 112 The internal evidence of the preface to *Yorick's Letters to Eliza* seems indicative of Wilkes's editorship

But Shandyism survives. Lessing exclaimed that he would have given ten years of his life to prolong Sterne's, and Lessing was a sane man and a great critic. Germany, indeed, proved the foster-mother of Sterne's genius. Societies were founded in his name, which still flourish. French as he frequently seems, he has appealed far more forcibly to Germany than to France. For, despite the quick march of science, the Germans have never ceased to be sentimental. The land of music and tobacco-smoke is loyal to Sterne, while his faculty for detachment and the crispness of his impressions mitigate that abstractness and bent for eternity which the Teutonic sentence embodies.

As author Sterne's province and immanence are unique His point of attack is modern, though he emerged from antique surroundings. Equally modern is the pitch of a voice at variance with the tone of his countrymen. His virtuosity was his own. And yet, despite the French envelope that often wraps his deliverance, he is English; Uncle Toby is Saxon to the core. Where Sterne diverges from England is in an ironical dreaminess almost Heinesque. The Irish part of him lies in his waywardness and his wistfulness. He seems compacted of several races, but his modernity may be summed up once more in this, that he took the woman's standpoint.

As a man he is barely lovable—for the simple reason that real love was but half known to him. He loved people not for their solid selves, but as they floated in his feelings; it was his feeling for them, and his feeling for his feeling, that he loved. And this is part of that essential shadowiness which distinguishes him throughout, from his first reveries to his last, from the first thrill of his nerves to their decay. Just as he steeped himself in the music of the Scriptures, while he disregarded their lesson, so he was too much enthralled by the tune of life to realise its meaning.

There was no clash of action, or practical force, or any sense of home, to lend strength to his sentiment, and round its faint orchestra the *maestro* hovered. Little could he realise but sensation. To be a clergyman gave him no sensation at all. His disrespectability, if we remember the standards of his day, hinged more on his office than on his lapses. Except in these flights of profane folly, wholly disreputable he was not. He minded his formal duties, he paid his debts, he was never ungenerous, and, in the main, he was truthful. His defiance of suffering is the most virile of his qualities, and this perhaps held his women-admirers as much as the feminine within him. Yet an indefinable flimsiness repels us, and would repel more had Sterne himself not disbelieved in it. The flicker of the embers which warmed him seems to escape in smoke up his own chimney. Yet common smoke it is not, it seems an enchanted vapour that broods as it curls in wreathing spirals of wonderful form.

As artist he endures. As an artist he is palpable and living. Nor is it otherwise than pathetic to think at what cost to the soul that gain has been secured. Many martyrs die to save the world outside those noble heroes who step consciously to the scaffold. Some of the holiest Italian pictures, it is said, were painted by penitents in anguish after nights of debauch. Out of their impurity purity has arisen, though the prolonged struggle dashed them to pieces. No such high conflict is visible in Sterne, yet conflict there was and appears. He was "positive that he had a soul." He knew that he was not an episode or an atom.

The sadness of such wreckage leads us to ponder over the good that results. Finer spirits have quickened his issues, but the issues are still Sterne's. Sterne is latent in the great moral impressionist Ruskin, and Sterne, again, in Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* and the *Christmas Carol*. He had this great courage in his generation, that he was not

STERNE'S JOURNAL TO ELIZA

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS Journal, which Sterne sought to disguise as a fiction, is transcribed from the Gibbs Manuscripts in the British Museum. It continues an earlier instalment which has been lost and seems, as Professor Cross conjectures, to have been originally consigned to the care of Mrs James, the depositary of her two friends' outpourings. If so, Mrs Sterne's face must have been a study when she discovered it, though she can hardly have been surprised at its contents. The autograph is accompanied by two letters of Sterne to his Eliza, the draft of one to her husband, and a long letter numbering some seventy-two pages of self-revelation from Mrs Draper to Mrs James, and this fact lends likelihood to the supposition. Mr Gibbs of Bath collected a library of which this came to be part and on his death his son Thomas, then a boy of eleven, rescued it from being "cut up into spills to light candles with." Since it lit up the candles of two fantastic beings, it is to be regretted that Thackeray, to whom it was shown for his *English Humourists*, neglected to use it. Had he perused Sterne's dream of the nun referred to in these pages as "Cordelia," he would have found an intrinsic aid to interpretation which he has missed in his shallow estimate

Though Yorick's diary displays the dotage of his feelings, yet its monotone once more instances that an actor can feel his part with the sincerity of sensation—even when his audience is unmoved.

The spelling in this transcript is left intact, and where Sterne thrice speaks of himself as the "Bramine," "Bramin" should of course be read : the "Bramine" is Eliza. A few consecutive sentences respecting a medical aspect of his case have been omitted.

WALTER SICHEL.

STERNE'S PREFACE

THIS Journal wrote under the fictitious names of Yorick & Draper—and sometimes of the Bramin & Bramine—but 'tis a Diary of the miserable feelings of a person separated from a Lady for whose society he languished—The real names are foreign—& the Acc^t a Copy from a french Mans in M^{rs} S——s hands—but wrote as it is to cast a Viel over them—There is a Counterpart—which is the Lady's Acc^t what trans-actions dayly happened—& what Sentiments occupied her mind, during this separation from her Admirer—these are worth reading—the translator cannot say so much in fav^r of Yorick's—which seem to have little merit beyond their honesty & truth—

reflection—& what object will employ the greatest part of mine—full well does my Eliza know.

Monday, Ap. 15.—worn out with fevers of all kinds but most, by that fever of the heart with which I am eternally wasting, & shall waste till I see Eliza again—dreadful suffering of 15 months!—it may be more—great Controuler of Events! surely thou wilt proportion this to my strength, and to that of my Eliza. passed the whole afternoon in reading her Letters, and reducing them to the order in which they were wrote to me—staid the whole evening at home—no pleasure or interest in either Society or Diversions—what a change, my dear Girl, hast thou made in me!—but the Truth is, thou hast only turn'd the tide of my passions a new way—they flow Eliza to thee—& ebb from every other Object in this world—& Reason tells me they do right—for my heart has rated thee at a Price, that all the world is not rich enough to purchase thee from me, at. In a high fever all the night,

Ap. 16.—and got up so ill, I could not go to M^{rs} James as I had promised her—took James's Powder however—& leaned the whole day with my head upon my hand, sitting most dejectedly at the Table with my Eliza's Picture before me sympathizing & soothing me—O my Bramine! my Friend! my Help-mate!—for that (if I am a prophet) is the Lot marked out for thee,—& such I consider thee now, & thence it is Eliza, I share so righteously with thee, in all the evil or good which befalls thee — — But all our portion is Evil now, & all our hours grief.—I look forward towards the Elysium we have so often and rapturously talk'd of—Cordelia's Spirit will fly to tell thee in some sweet slumber, the moment the door is opened for thee—& the Bramin of the Vally shall follow the track wherever it leads him, to get to his Eliza & invite her to his Cottage.—

5 in the afternoon —I have just been eating my Chicking, sitting over my repast upon it with Tears—a bitter Sause—Eliza ! but I could eat it with no other—when Molly spread the Table cloath, my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate—one knife & fork—one Glass !—O Eliza ! 'twas painfully distressing—I gave a thousand pensive penetrating Looks at the Arm chair thou so often graced on these quiet sentimental Repasts—& Sighed & laid down my knife & fork,—& took out my handkerchief, clap'd it across my face & wept like a child—I shall read the same affecting Acc^t of many a sad Dinner w^{ch} Eliza has had no power to taste of, from the same feelings and recollections, how she and her Bramin have eat their bread in peace and Love together

April 17 —with my friend M^{rs} James in Gerard Street, with a present of Colours & apparatus for painting Long conversation about thee, my Eliza—sunk my heart wth an infamous Acc^t of Draper & his detested character at Bombay—for what a wretch art thou hazarding thy life, my dear friend, & what thanks is his nature capable of returning ?—thou wilt be repaid by injuries & Insults ! still there is a blessing in store for the meek & gentle, & Eliza will not be disinherited of it her Bramin is kept alive by this hope only—otherwise he is so sunk both in spirits & looks, Eliza would scarce know him again dined alone again today, & begin to feel a pleasure in this kind of resigned misery arising from that situation of heart unsupported by aught but its own tenderness—Thou owest me much, Eliza !—& I will have patience for thou wilt pay me all—But the Demand is equal, much I owe thee, & with much shalt thou be requitted. — — Sent for a Chart of the Atlantic Ocean, to make conjectures upon what part of it my Treasure was floating O ! 'tis but a little way off—and I could venture after it in a Boat methinks—

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I'm sure I could, was I to know Eliza was in distress—but fate has chalked out other roads for us—we must go on with many a weary step each in this separate heartless track till Nature — —

Ap. 18.—This day set up my carriage—new subject of heart-ache that Eliza is not here to share it with me. Bought Orm's account of India—why?—Let not my Bramine ask me—her heart will tell her why I do this, & every-thing—

Ap. 19.—poor sick-headed, sick-hearted Yorick! Eliza has made a shadow of thee—I am absolutely good for nothing, as every mortal is who can think & talk but upon one thing!—how I shall rally my powers alarms me; for Eliza has melted them all into one—the power of loving thee—with such ardent affection as triumphs over all other feelings—was with our faithful friend all the morning; & dined with her & James—What is the cause that I can never talk ab^t my Eliza to her but I am rent in pieces?—I burst into tears a dozen Different times after dinner, & such affectionate gusts of passion, That she was ready to leave the room & sympathise [*several erasures*] in private for us. I weep for you both said she (in a whisper) for Eliza's anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—heaven will join your hands I'm sure together.—James was occupied in reading a pamphlet upon the East India affairs—so I answered her with a kind look, a heavy sigh & a stream of tears—what was passing in Eliza's breast at this affecting crisis?—something kind, and pathetic! I will lay my life.

8 o'clock.—retired to my room, to tell my dear this—to run back the hours of joy I have passed with her—to meditate upon those w^{ch} are still in reserve for us.—By this time M^r James tells me, you will have got as far from me as the Maderas—& that in two months more you will have doubled the Cape of Good Hope—I shall trace thy

track every day in the Map, & not allow an hour for contrary Winds or Currents—every engine of nature shall work together for us—'Tis the language of Love & I can speak no other & so, good night to thee, & may the gentlest delusions of Love impose upon thy dreams, as I forbode they will this night on those of thy Bramine

April 20 Easter Sunday—Was not disappointed—yet awoke in the most acute pain—Something, Eliza, is wrong with me [*Many erasures*] You should be ill out of sympathy—& yet you are too ill already my dear friend—[*Whole lines of erasures*] All day at home in extreme dejection

April 21—The Loss of Eliza, & attention to that one Idea, brought on a fever—a consequence I have for some time forseen—but had not a sufficient Stock of cold philosophy to remedy—to satisfy my friends call'd in a Physician—Alas! alas! the only Physician & who carries the Balm of my Life along with her is Eliza—why did I suffer thee to go from me? surely thou hast more than once call'd thyself my Eliza, to the same Account—'twill cost us both dear! but it could not be otherwise—We have submitted—we shall be rewarded

'Twas a prophetic Spirit which dictated the Acc^t of Corporal Trim's uneasy night when the fair Beguin ran in his head,—for every night & almost every slumber of mine is a repetition of the same description—dear Eliza I am very ill—very ill for thee—but I could still give thee greater proofs of my affection

parted with 12 ounces of blood, in order to quiet what was left in me—'tis a vain experiment,—physicians cannot understand this, 'tis enough for me that Eliza does—I am worn down my dear Girl to a shadow & but that I'm certain thou wilt not read this till I'm restored—thy Yorick would not let the Winds hear his complaints — —

4 o'clock.—sorrowful meal! for 'twas upon an old dish—we shall live to eat it my dear Bramine, with comfort.

8 at night.—our dear friend M^{rs} James, from the forbodings of a good heart, thinking I was ill sent her Maid to enquire after me.—I had alarmed her on Saturday; & not being with her on Sunday, her friendship supplied the condition I was in.—She suffers most tenderly for us my Eliza! & we owe her more than all the sex—or indeed both Sexes, if not all the world put together—adieu! my sweet Eliza for this night—thy Yorick is going to waste himself on a restless bed where he will turn from side to side a thousand times—& dream by intervals of things terrible & impossible—that Eliza is false to Yorick or Yorick is false to Eliza.

Ap. 22^d.—rose with utmost difficulty—my Physician ordered me back to bed as soon as I had got a dish of Tea—was bled again; & my arm broke loose & I half bled to death in bed before I felt it. O Eliza! how did thy Bramin mourn the want of thee to tye up his wounds & comfort his dejected heart—still something bids me hope—& hope I will—& it shall be the last pleasurable sensation I part with.

4 o'clock.—They are making my bed—how shall I be able to continue my Journal in it?—If there remains a chasm here—think Eliza, how ill thy Yorick must have been.—this moment rec^d a card from our dear friend begging me to take [care?] of a life so valuable to my friend—but most so she adds, to my poor dear Eliza.—not a word from the Newnhams! but they had no such exhortations in their hearts, to send thy Bramine—adieu to 'em!—

Ap. 23.—a poor night. and am only able to quit my bed at 4 this afternoon—to say a word to my dear—& fulfil my engagement to her of letting no day pass over my head without some kind communication with thee—faint resem

blance, my dear Girl, of how our days are to pass when one kingdom holds us—visited in bed by 40 friends in the Course of the Day—is not one warm affectionate call, of that friend for whom I sustain Life, worth 'em all?—what thinkest thou, my Eliza?

Ap 24 —So ill I could not write a word all this morning—not so much, as Eliza! farewel to thee, I'm going——am a little better—

—So I shall not depart, as I apprehended—being this morning something better—& my symptoms become milder by a tolerable easy night

Everything convinces me, Eliza, We shall live to meet again—So—Take care of y^r health, to add to the comfort of it

Ap 25 —After a tolerable night I am able, Eliza, to sit up & hold a discourse with the sweet Picture thou hast left behind thee of thyself, & tell it how I had dreaded the catastrophe of never seeing its dear Original more in this world—never did that look of sweet resignation appear so eloquent as now, it has said more to my heart & cheer'd it up more effectually above little fears & *waybe's*—Than all the Lectures of philosophy I have strength to apply to it in my present debility of mind & body—As for the latter—my men of science will set it properly going again—tho' upon what principles—the wise Men of is^lsotham know as much as they—If they *act right*—What ill it to me how *wrong they think*, for finding my machine so much less tormenting one than before, I become reconciled to my situation, and to their Ideas of it — — — but don't you pity me after all, my dearest & my best of friends? I know to what amount thou wilt shed over me this tender Tax—& 'tis the Consolation springing out of that, & of what a good heart it is which pours this friendly balm on mine, That has already, & will for ever heal every

evil of my Life. and what is becoming of my Eliza, all this time!—where is she sailing?—what sickness or other evils have befallen her? I weep often my dear Girl, for those my Imagination surrounds thee with—What would be the measure of my sorrow, did I know thou wast distressed?—adieu—adieu—& trust my dear friend, my dear Bramine, that there still wants nothing to kill me in a few days but the certainty that thou wast suffering what I am—and yet I know that thou art ill—but when thou returnest back to England, all shall be set right—so heaven waft thee to us upon the wings of Mercy—that is as speedily as the winds & tides can do thee this friendly office. This is the 7th day that I have tasted nothing better than Water gruel—am going, at the solicitation of Hall, to eat of a boil'd fowl—so he dines with me on it—and a dish of Macareels.

7 o'clock.—I have drunk to thy Name Eliza! everlasting peace & happiness (my toast) in the first glass of Wine I have ventured to drink my friend has left me—& I am alone—like thee in thy solitary Cabin after thy return from a tasteless meal in the round house, & like thee I fly to my Journal to tell thee I never prized thy friendship so high, or loved thee more—or wished so ardently to be a sharer of all the weights w^{ch} Providence has laid upon thy tender frame—Than this moment—when upon taking up my pen my poor pulse quickened—my pale face glowed—& tears stood ready in my eyes to fall upon the paper, as I traced the word Eliza. O Eliza! Eliza! ever best & blessed of all thy Sex! blessed in thyself & in thy Virtues—& blessed & endearing to all who know thee—to me Eliza most so because *I know more* of thee than any other—This is the true philtre by which thou hast charmed me & will for ever charm & hold me thine whilst Virtue and faith hold this world together; for the

worthy sentimental friend—who rejoices to think that the name of Eliza is still to vibrate upon Yorick's ear—this, my dear Girl, many who loved me despaired of—poor Molly who is all attention to me—& every day brings in the name of poor M^{rs} Draper, told me last night that she & her Mistress had observed I had never held up my head since the Day you last dined with me—that I had seldom laughed or smiled—had gone to no Diversions—but twice or thrice at the most dined out—That they thought I was broken-hearted, for she never entered the room or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily—That I neither eat or slept or took pleasure in anything as before, except writing—The Observation will draw a sigh, Eliza, from thy feeling heart—& yet, so thy heart w^d wish to have it—'tis fit in truth we suffer equally—nor can it be otherwise when the Causes of anguish in two hearts are so proportion'd as are ours.—Surely, surely thou art mine, Eliza ! for dear have I bought thee !

Ap. 27.—Things go better with me, Eliza ! and I shall be reestablished soon except in bodily weakness ; not yet being able to rise from thy Arm chair & walk to the other corner of my room, & back to it again without fatigue—I shall double my journey tomorrow, & if the day is warm the day after be got into my Carriage & be transported into Hyde Park for the adventure of air & exercise—wast thou but besides me I could go to Salt Hill I'm sure & feel the journey short & pleasant—another Time ! . . . —the present alas is not ours. I pore so much on thy Picture—I have it *off by heart*—dear Girl—oh 'tis sweet ! 'tis kind ! 'tis reflective ! 'tis affectionate ! 'tis—thine my Bramine. I say my matins & vespers to it—I quiet my murmurs by the Spirit which speaks in it “All will end well, my Yorick !” I declare my dear Bramine I am so secured & wrapt up in this belief That I would not part with the

Imagination of how happy I am to be with thee, for all the offers of present Interest or Happiness the whole world could tempt me with, in the loneliest cottage that Love & Humility ever dwelt in, with thee along with me, I could possess more refined Content than in the most glittering Court, & with thy love & fidelity taste truer joys my Eliza! & make thee also partake of more, than all the senseless parade of this silly world could compensate to either of us—with this I bound all my desires & worldly views—what are they worth without Eliza? Jesus! grant me but this, I will deserve it—I will make my Bramine as happy as thy goodness wills her—I will be the Instrument of her recompense for the sorrows & disappointments thou has suffered her to undergo, & if ever I am false, unkind or ungentle to her, so let me be dealt with by thy Justice

9 o'clock—I am preparing to go to bed my dear Girl, & first pray for thee, & then idolize thee for two wakeful hours upon my pillow—I shall after that I find dream all night of thee, for all the day I have done nothing but think of thee—something tells that thou hast this day, been employed exactly in the same Way good night, fair soul—& may the sweet God of sleep close gently thy eyelids—& govern & direct thy slumbers—adieu! adieu, adieu!

Ap 28—I was not deceived, Eliza! by my presentiment that I should find thee out in my dreams, for I have been with thee almost the whole night, alternately soothing Thee and telling thee my sorrows—& I have rose up comforted & strengthened & found myself so much better that I ordered my Carriage to carry me to our mutual friend—Tears ran down her cheeks when she saw how pale & wan I was—never gentle creature sympathised more tenderly—I beseech you, cried she good soul, not to regard either difficulties or expenses, but fly to Eliza directly—I see you will dye without her—save yourself for her—how

shall I look her in the face, what can I say to her, when on her return I have to tell her That her Yorick is no more !—Tell her my dear friend, said I, that I will meet her in a better world—& that I have left this because I couldnt live without her ; tell Eliza, my dear friend, added I—That I died broken-hearted—and that you were a witness to it—as I said this she burst into the most pathetick flood of Tears [*erasures*] that ever kindly Nature shed—you never beheld so affecting a scene—'Twas too much for Nature !—Oh she is good—I love her as my sister ! & could Eliza have been a witness hers would have melted down to Death & scarce have been brought back, from an Extacy so celestial & savouring of another world.—I had like to have fainted, & to that Degree was my heart and Soul affected it was wth difficulty I could reach the street door ; I have got home & shall lay all day upon my Sopha—& tomorrow morning, my dear Girl, write again to thee ; for I have not strength to drag my pen.

April 29.—I am so ill today my dear I can only tell you so—I wish I was put into a ship for Bombay—I wish I may otherwise hold out till the hour we might otherwise have met—I have too many evils upon me at once—& yet I will not faint under them—Come !—Come to me soon my Eliza & save me !

April 30.—Better today—but am too much visited & find my strength wasted by the attention I must give to all concern'd for me—I will go Eliza, be it only by ten mile journeys, home to my thatched cottage—& there I shall have no respite—for I shall do nothing but think of thee—& burn out this weak taper of Life, by the flame thou hast superadded to it—farewell my dear. . . .—tomorrow begins a new month—& I hope to give thee in it a more sunshiny side of myself—Heaven ! how is it with my Eliza ?—

May 1 — Got out into the park today—Sheba there on horseback, pass'd twice by her without knowing her—She stop'd the third time to ask me how I did I w^d not have asked you, Solomon, said she, but y^r looks affected me—for you're half dead I fear—I thank'd Sheba very kindly, but wthout any emotion but what sprung from gratitude—Love alas! was fled with thee Eliza! I did not think Sheba could have changed so much in grace & beauty—Thou hadst shrunk poor Sheba away into Nothing, but a good-natured girl without powers or charms—I fear your wife is dead, quoth Sheba—No, you don't fear it, Sheba said I Upon my word Solomon! I would quarrel with you was you not so ill—If you knew the cause of my illness Sheba, said I, you would quarrel but the more with me—You lie, Solomon! answered Sheba, for I know the cause already—& am so little out of charity with you upon it That I give you leave to come & drink Tea with me before you leave town—you're a good honest creature Sheba—No! you Rascal, I am not—but I'm in Love, as much as you can be for your Life—I'm glad of it Sheba! said I—You lie, said Sheba, & so canter'd away Oh my Eliza, had I ever truly loved another (w^{ch} I never did) Thou hast long ago cut the root of all affection in me—& planted & water'd & nourish'd it to bear fruit only for thyself—Continue to give me proofs I have had & shall preserve the same rights over thee my Eliza! & if I ever murmur at the sufferings of Life after that Let me be numbered with the ungrateful I look now forwards with impatience to the day thou art to get to Madras—& from thence shall I want to hasten thee to Bombay—where heaven will make all things conspire to lay the Basis of thy health and future Happiness—be true my dear Girl to thyself—& to the rights of self preservation which Nature has given thee—persevere—be firm—be pliant—be placid—be courteous

—but still be true to thyself—& never give up your life, or suffer the [*a word illegible*] altercations, or small outrages you may undergo in this momentous point to weigh a scruple in the Ballance—Firmness—& fortitude & perseverance gain almost impossibilities—& “Skin for skin, saith Job, nay all that a man has, will he give for his Life”—Oh my Eliza! that I could take the wings of the Morning and fly to aid thee in this virtuous Struggle. went to Ranelagh at 8 this night, & sat still till ten—came home ill.

May 2^d.—I fear I have relapsed—sent afresh for my Doctor—who has confined me to my Sopha—being neither able to walk stand or sit upright without aggravating my symptoms.—I’m still to be treated as if I was a sinner—& in truth have some appearances so strongly implying it That was I not conscious I would decamp tomorrow for Montpellier in the South of France but If I continue being ill—I am still determind to repair there—not to undergo a cure of a distemper I cannot have, but for the bettering my constitution by a better climate. I write this as I lie upon my back in w^{ch} posture I must continue, I fear some days. If I am able will take up my pen again before night—

4 o’clock.—An hour dedicated to Eliza! for I have dined alone—& ever since the cloath has been laid have done nothing but call upon thy dear Name—and ask why ’tis not permitted thou shouldst sit down, & share my Macarel & fowl—there would be enough, said Molly as she placed it on the table, to have served both you & poor Mrs Draper—I never bung in the knives & forks, added she, but I think of her—There was no more trouble with you both, than wth one of you—I never heard a high or a hasty word from either of you—You were surely made, added Molly, for one another. You are both so kind so quiet & so friendly.—Molly furnished me with Sause

to my meat—for I wept my plate full, Eliza! & now I have begun, could shed tears till supper again—& then go to bed weeping for thy absence till morning Thou hast bewitch'd me with powers, my dear Girl, from which no power shall unlose me—and if Fate can put this Journal of my Love into thy hands, before we meet I know with what warmth it will inflame the kindest of hearts to receive me peace be with thee, my Eliza, till that happy moment!

9 at night—I shall never get possession of myself, Eliza! at this rate—I want to call off my thoughts from thee, that I [may] now & then apply them to some concerns w^{ch} require both my attention & genius, but to no purpose—I had a letter to write to Lord Shelburn—& had got my apparatus in order to begin—when a Map of India coming in my way—I begun to study the length & dangers of my Eliza's voyage to it, and have been amusing & frightening myself by turns, as I traced the pathway of the Earl of Chatham, the whole afternoon—good god! what a voyage for any one!—but for the poor relaxed frame of my tender Bramine to cross the Line twice! & be subject to the Intolerant heats, & the hazards which must be the consequence of em to such an unsupported Being!—O Eliza! 'tis too much—& if thou conquerest these, & all the other difficulties of so tremendous an alienation from thy country, thy children & thy friends, 'tis the hand of Providence w^{ch} watches over thee for most merciful purposes—Let this persuasion, my dear Eliza, stick close to thee in all thy tryals—as it shall in those thy faithful Bramin is put to—till the mark'd hour of deliverance comes I'm going to sleep upon this religious Elixir—may the Infusion of it distil into the gentlest of hearts—for that Eliza! is thine—sweet, dear, faithful Girl, most kindly does thy Yorick greet thee with the wishes of a good night, & of millions yet to come—

May 3rd. Sunday.—what can be the matter with me! Something is wrong, Eliza, in every part of me—I do not gain strength; nor have I the feelings of health returning back to me, even my best moments seem merely the efforts of my mind to get well again, because I cannot reconcile myself to the thought of never seeing thee Eliza more.—for something is out of tune in every chord of me—still with thee to nurse and sooth me I should soon do well—The want of thee is half my distemper—but not the whole of it—I must see M^{rs} James tonight, tho I know not how to get there—but I shall not sleep, if I don't talk of you to her—so shall finish this Day's Journal on my return—

May 4.—Directed by M^{rs} James how to write Overland to thee, my Eliza!—would gladly tear out this much of my Journal to send to thee—but the chances are too many against its getting to Bombay—or of being deliver'd into your own hands—shall write a long long letter—& trust it to Fate & thee. was not able to say three words to M^{rs} James thro' utter weakness of body & mind; & when I got home could not get upstairs without Molly's aid—have rose a little better my dear Girl—& will live for thee—do the same for thy Bramin, I beseech thee. a Line from thee now in this state of my dejection, would be worth a kingdom to me!—

May 4.—Writing by way of Vienna & Bussorah, my Eliza.—this & Company took up the day.

5th.—Writing to Eliza — & trying l'Extraite de Saturne [?]¹ upon myself—(a french nostrum)——

6th.—Dined out for the 1st time—came home to enjoy a more harmonious evening wth my Eliza than I could expect at Soho Concert—every Thing my dear Girl, has lost its former relish to me—and for thee alone does it quicken! writing to thee over Land all day.

¹ The sheet has been mended here, and a syllable expunged.

7—continue poorly, my dear!—but my blood runs every mom^t I think of our future scenes so must grow strong upon the Idea—what shall I do upon the Reality?
—O God!

8th—employed in writing to my Dear all day—& in projecting happiness for her—tho in misery myself O I have undergone Eliza—but the worst is over (I hope)—so adieu to these Evils, & let me hail the happiness to come

9th, 10th, 11th—So unaccountably disordered—I cannot say more—but that I w suffer ten times more with wishes for my Eliza—adieu bless'd Woman!—

12th—O Eliza! that my weary head was now laid upon thy Lap—(tis all that's left for it)—or that I had thine reclining upon my bosome, and there resting all its inquietudes, my Bramine—the world or Yorick must perish, before that foundation shall fail thee!—I continue poorly—but I turn my eyes Eastward the oftener, & with more earnestness for it—Great God of Mercy! shorten the space betwixt us—Shorten the space and our miseries!

13th—Could not get the General Post Office to take charge of my Letters to you—so gave thirty shillings to a Merchant to further them to Aleppo, & from thence to Bussorah—so you will receive em (I hope in god) by Christmas—Surely tis not impossible but I may be made as happy as my Eliza, by some transcript from her by that time—If not I shall hope—& hope every week & every hour of it for Tidings of comfort—we taste not of it now my dear Bramine—but we will make full meals upon it hereafter—Cards from 7 or 8 of our Grandees to dine with them before I leave Town—shall go like a lamb to the slaughter—“Man delights not me—nor Woman”

14—a little better today—& would look pert if my heart would but let me—dined with Lord & Lady

Bellasis.—so beset with Company—not a moment to write.

15.—Undone with too much Society yesterday—You scarce can conceive, my dear Eliza, what a poor Soul I am—how I shall be got down to Coxwould heaven knows—for I am as weak as a child—You would not like me the worse for it Eliza, if you was here—My friends like me the more,—& I swear I shew more true fortitude & evenness of temper in my suffering than Seneca or Socrates—I am, my Bramine, resigned.

16.—Taken up all day with worldly matters just as my Eliza was the week before her departure—breakfasted with Lady Spencer—caught her with the Character of y^r Portrait—caught her passions still more with that of y^rself & my attachment to the most amiable of Beings—drove at night to Ranelagh—staid an hour—returned to my lodgings dissatisfied.

17.—At Court—everything in this world seems in masquerade, but thee dear Woman, and therefore I am sick of all the world but thee—one Evening so spent as the Saturday's which preceded our separation would sicken all the conversation of the world—relise no converse since—when will the like return?—tis hidden from us both for the wisest ends—And the hour will come my Eliza! when we shall be convinced that every event has been ordered for the best for us—Our fruit is not ripen'd—the accidents of time & Seasons will ripen every Thing Together for Us—a little better today—or could not have wrote this. dear Bramine rest thy Sweet Soul in peace!

18.—Laid sleepless all the night thinking of the many dangers & sufferings, my dear Girl! that thou art exposed to—from thy Voyage & thy sad state of health—but I find I must think no more upon them—I have rose wan & trembling with the Havock they have made upon

my nerves—'tis death to me to apprehend for you—I must flatter my Imagination, That every Thing goes well with you—Surely no evil can have befallen you—for if it had—I had felt some monitory sympathetic shock within me w^{ch} would have spoke like Revelation—So farewell to all tormenting *may-be's* in regard to my Eliza—she is well—she thinks of her Yorick with as much affection & true esteem as ever—and values him as much above the world as he values his Bramine——

19—Packing up, or rather Molly for me, the whole day—tormenting ! had not Molly all the time talked of poor M^m Draper & recounted every Visit she had made me, and every repast she had shared with me—how good a Lady !—How sweet a temper !—how beautiful !—how genteel !—how gentle a carriage—& how soft & engaging a look !—the poor girl is bewitched with us both—infinitely interested in our story, tho' she knows nothing of it but from her penetration & conjectures—She says however 'tis impossible not to be in love with her—In heart-felt truth, Eliza ! I'm of Molly's opinion——

20—Taking Leave of all the Town, before my departure tomorrow

21—detained by Lord & Lady Spencer who had made a party to dine & sup on my Acc^t Impatient to set out for my Solitude—there the mind, Eliza, gains strength & learns to lean upon herself,—& seeks refuge in its own Constancy & Virtue—in the world it seeks or accepts of a few treacherous supports—the feigned compassion of one—the flattery of a second—the civilities of a third—the friendship of a fourth—they all deceive—& bring the mind back to where mine is retreating—that is, Eliza, to itself—to thee who art my second self—to retirement, reflection and Books—when the stream of things dear Bramine, Brings us both together to this Haven—will not your heart take up

its rest for ever? & will not your head Leave the world to those who can make a better thing of it—if there are any who know how.—Heaven take thee Eliza! under its wing—adieu! adieu!——

22nd.—Left Bond Street & London with it this morning.—What a Creature I am! my heart has ached this week to get away—& still was ready to bleed in quitting a Place where my connection with my dear dear Eliza began—Adieu to it! till I am summoned up to the Downs by a message to fly to her—for I think I shall not be able to support Town without you—& w^d. chuse rather to sit solitary here till the End of the next Summer—to be made happy altogether,—than seek for happiness—or even suppose I can have it, but in Eliza's Society.

23rd.—Bear my Journey badly—ill—& dispirited all the way—staid two days on the road at the A-Bishops of Yorks—shew'd his Grace & his Lady and Sister y^r portrait—wth a short but interesting story of my friendship for the Original.—kindly nursed and honored both—arrived at my thatched Cottage the 28th of May.

29th & 30th.—confined to my bed—so emaciated, & unlike what I was, I could scarce be angry with thee Eliza, if thou shouldst not remember me, did heaven send me across thy way—Alas! poor Yorick!—remember thee! Pale Ghost!—remember thee—whilst Memory holds a seat in this distracted world—Remember thee—Yes, from the Table of her Memory, shall just Eliza wipe away all trivial men & leave a throne for Yorick—adieu dear constant Girl—adieu—adieu—& Remember my Truth & eternal fidelity—Remember how I Love—remember what I suffer.—Thou art my Eliza by Purchase—had I not earned thee with a bitter price.——

31.—Going this day upon a long course of corrosive Mercury—wth in itself is deadly poyson, but given in a

certain preparation, not very dangerous—I was forced to give it up in Town, from the horrible Cholick both in Stomach & Bowels—but the Faculty thrust it down my Throat again—These Gentry have got it into their Nodelles That mine is an *Ecchviastick Rhounn* as the french call it—god help em ! I submit as my Uncle Toby did in drinking Water, upon the wound he received in his Groin—*merely for quietness sake*

June 1 —The Faculty, my dear Eliza ! have mistaken my Case—why not Y^{rs} ? I wish I could fly to you & attend you but one month as a Physician—you'l Languish & dye where you are,—(if not by the climate)—most certainly by their *Ignorance of y^r Case*, & the unskilful Treatment you must be a martyr to in such a place as Bombay—I'm Languishing here myself with every Aid & help—& tho I shall conquer it—yet have had a cruel struggle—w^d my dear friend I could ease y^{rs}, either by my Advice—my attention—my Labour—my praise—They are all at y^r Service, such as they are—& that you know, Eliza—or my friendship for you is not worth a rush

June 2 —This morning surprised with a Letter from my Lydia—that She & her Mama are coming to pay me a Visit—but on Condition I promise not to detain them in England beyond next April—when they purpose, by my Consent to retire into France & establish themselves for Life—To all which I have freely given my parole of Honour —& so shall have them with me for the Summer—from Oct^r to April—they take lodgings in York—When they leave me for good & all I suppose — — Every thing for the best ! Eliza

This unexpected visit is neither a visit of friendship or form—but tis a visit such as I know you would never make me,—of pure Interest—to pillage what they can from me In the first place to sell a small estate I have of sixty p^d

a year—& lay out the purchase money in joint annuities for them in the french Funds; by this they will obtain 200 p^{ds} a year to be continued to the longer Liver—and as it rids me of all future care, and moreover transfers their Income to the Kingdom where they purpose to live—I'm truly acquiescent—tho I lose the contingency of surviving them—but tis no matter—I shall have enough—& a hundred or two hundred Pounds for Eliza whenever she will honour me by putting her hand into my Purse — — In the mean time I am not sorry for this Visit, as every Thing will be finally settled between us by it—only as their Annuity will be too strait—I shall engage to remit them a 100 Guineas a year more, during my Wife's Life—& then I will think Eliza, of living for myself & the Being I love as much.—But I shall be pillaged in a hundred small Items by them—w^{ch} I have a Spirit above saying *No*—to; as Provisions of all sorts of Linnens—for house use—body use—printed Linnens for Gowns—Magazeens of Teas—Plate all I have, (but 6 silver spoons)—In short I shall be plucked bare—all but of y^r Portrait & snuff Box & other dear Presents—& the neat furniture of my thatch'd Palace —& upon these I set up Stock again, Eliza What say you, Eliza! shall we join our *little Capitals together*?—will M^r Draper give us leave?—he may safely—if your *Virtue* & Honour are only concerned, 'twould be safe in Yorick's hands as in a Brother's—I w'd not wish M^r Draper to allow you above half I allow M^{rs} Sterne—Our Capital would be too great & tempt us from the Society of poor Cordelia—who begins to wish for you

By this time I trust you have doubled the Cape of good hope—sat down to your writing Drawer, & looked in Yorick's face, as you took out your Journal to tell him so—I hope he seems to smile as kindly upon you Eliza, as ever—y^r attachment & Love for me, will make him do

so to eternity—if ever he sh^d change his Air, Eliza!—I charge you catechize your own Heart—Oh! twill never happen!—

June 3^d—Cannot write my Travels, or give one half hours close attention to them, upon Thy Acc^t my dearest friend—Yet write I must, & what to do with you whilst I write—I declare I know not—I want to have you ever before my Imagination—& cannot keep you out of my heart or head—In short thou enters my Library Eliza! (as thou one day shalt) without tapping—or sending for—by thy own Right of ever being close to thy Bramine—now I must shut you out sometimes—or meet you Eliza! with an empty purse upon the Beach—pity my entanglements from other passions—my Wife with me every moment of the Summer—think w^t restraint upon a Fancy that should sport & be in all points at its ease—O had I my dear Bramine this Summer, to soften—& modulate my feelings—to enrich my Fancy & fill my heart brim full with bounty—my Book w^d be worth the reading—

It will be by stealth if I am able to go on with my Journal at all—It will have many Interruptions—& Heyho's most sentimentally uttered—Thou must take it as it pleases God—as thou must take the Writer—eternal blessings be about you Eliza! I am a little better, & now find I shall be set right in all points—my only anxiety is about you—I want to prescribe for you my Eliza—for I think I understand your *Case* better than the Faculty adieu adieu

June 4—Hussy!—I have employed a full hour upon y^r sweet sentimental Picture—and a couple of hours upon yourself—& with as much kind friendship as the hour You left me—I deny it—Time lessens no affections w^{ch} Honour & merit have planted—I w^d give more, and hazard more now for your happiness than in any one period

since I first learn'd to esteem you—is it so with my friend? has absence weaken'd my Interest?—has time worn out any Impression—or is Yorick's name less musical in Eliza's ears?—my heart smites me for asking the question—tis Treason agst thee, Eliza, and Truth—Ye are dear Sisters and y^r Brother Bramin can never live to see a separation amongst us.—What a similitude in our Trials whilst asunder!—Providence has ordered every step better than we could have ordered them, for the particular good we wish each other—This you will comment upon & find the sense of without my explanation.

I wish this Summer & Winter wth all I am to go through with in them in business & Labour & Sorrow, well over—I have much to compose—& much to decompose me—with my Wife's projects & my own views arising out of them, to harmonize & turn to account—I have Millions of heart aches to suffer & reason with—& in all this Storm of Passions I have but one small anchor, Eliza! to keep this weak vessel of mine from perishing—I trust all I have to it—as I trust Heaven which cannot leave me without a fault to perish.—may the same just Heaven my Eliza, be that eternal canopy w^{ch} shall shelter thy head from evil till we meet—adieu—adieu——

June 5 —I sit down to write this day in good earnest—so read Eliza! quickly besides me—I'll not give you a look—except one of kindness—dear Girl! if thou lookest so bewitching once more—I'll turn thee out of my Study—You may bid me defiance, Eliza—You cannot conceive how much & how universally I am pitied, upon the score of this unexpected visit from france—my friends think it will kill me—If I find myself in danger I'll fly to you to Bombay—will M^r Draper receive me?—he ought—but he will never know what reasons make it his *Interest & Duty*—We must leave all all to that Being who is infinitely

removed above all straitness of heart—& is a friend to the friendly, as well as to the friendless.

June 6—am quite alone in the depth of that sweet Recess I have so often described to you—tis sweet in itself—but You never come across me—but the perspective brightens up & every Tree & Hill & Vale & Ruin abt me smiles as if you was admist 'em—delusive moments!—how pensive a price do I pay for you—fancy sustains the Vision whilst she has strength—but Eliza! Eliza is not with me!—I sit down upon the first Hillock solitary as a sequestered Bramin—I wake from my delusion to a thousand disquietudes which many talk of—my Eliza!—but few feel—then weary my Spirit with thinking, plotting & projecting—& when I've brought my System to my mind—am only Doubly miserable That I cannot execute it Thus—thus my dear Bramine are we tost at present in this Tempest—Some Haven of rest will open to us assuredly—God made us not for Misery & Ruin—he has ordered all our steps—& influenced our attachments for what is worthy of Them—It must end well—Eliza!—

June 7—I have this week finished a sweet little apartment which all the time it was doing I flattered the most delicious of ideas in thinking I was making it for you—Tis a neat little simple elegant room, overlooked only by the Sun—just big enough to hold a Sopha—for us—[long erasure] a Table, four Chairs, a Bureau & a Book case—They are to be all yours, Room & all—& there Eliza! shall I enter ten times a day to give thee Testimonies of my devotion—wast thou this moment sat down it w^d be the sweetest of earthly Tabernacles—I shall enrich it from time to time for thee—till Fate lets me lead thee by the hand into it—& then it can want no Ornament—tis a little oblong room with a large Sash at the end—a little elegant fireplace—wth as much room to dine around it as in Bond Street—But

in sweetness & Simplicity & silence beyond anything—Oh my Eliza !—I shall see thee surely Goddess of this Temple—& the most sovereign one of all I have—& of all the powers Heaven has trusted me with—They were lent me Eliza ! only for thee—& for thee my dear Girl shall be kept & employed.—You know *what rights* You have over me—wish to heaven I could convey the Grant more amply than I have done—but tis the same—tis registered where it will longest last—& that is in the most feeling & most sincere of human hearts—You know I mean this reciprocally—& whenever I mention the Word Fidelity & Truth in Speaking of y^r reliance on mine, I always Imply the same Reliance upon the same Virtues in my Eliza.—I love thee Eliza ! & will love thee for ever. Adieu.—

June 8.—Begin to recover & sensibly to gain strength every day—& have such an appetite as I have not had for years—I prophecy I shall be the better for the very Accident which has occasioned my Illness—& that the Medicines and Regimen I have submitted to will make a thorough Regeneration of me, & that I shall have more health and strength than I have enjoy'd these ten years.—Send me such an account of thyself Eliza, by the first sweet Gale—but tis impossible you sh^d from Bombay—'twil be as fatal to You as it has been to thousands of y^r Sex—England & Retirement in it can only save you—Come !—Come away !

June 9th.—I keep a post chaise & a couple of fine horses, & take the Air every day in it—I go out—& return to my Cottage Eliza ! alone—tis melancholly, what sh^d be matter of enjoyment ; & the more so far that reason — — I have a thousand things to remark & say as I roll along—but I want You to say them to—I could sometimes be wise—& often witty—but I feel it a reproach to be the latter whilst Eliza is so far from hearing me—& what is wisdom

Estate besides me—to send the money into France to purchase peace to myself—& a certainty of never having it interrupted by M^{rs} Sterne—who when she is sensible I have given her all I can part with—will be at rest herself—Indeed her plan to purchase Annuitys in France—is a pledge of Security to me—That she will live her days out there—otherwise she could have no end in transporting this two thousand pounds out of England—nor w^d I consent but upon that plan—but I may be at rest!—if my Imagination will but let me—Hall says tis no matter where she lives; if we are but separate, tis as good as if the Ocean rolled between us—& so I should argue to another Man—but tis an Idea which wont do so well for me—& tho nonsensical enough—Yet I shall be most at rest when there is that Bar between us—was I never so sure, I sh^d never be interrupted by her in England—but I may be at rest I say on this head—for they have left all their cloaths & plate & Linnen behind them in france—& have joined in the most earnest Entreaty That they may return & fix in france—to w^{ch} I have given my word & honour—You will be bound with me Eliza! I hope for performance of my promise—I never yet broke it in Cases where Interest or pleasure could have tempted me—and shall hardly do it [*many words erased*] now when tempted only by misery.—In Truth Eliza! thou art the object to w^{ch} every act of mine is directed—You interfere in every Project—I rise—I go to sleep with this in my brain—how will my dear Bramine approve of this?—w^{ch} way will it conduce to make her happy? & how will it be a proof of my affection to her? are all the enquiries I make—Y^r Honour, y^r Conduct, y^r Truth & regard for my esteem—I know will equally direct every step—& movement of your desires—& with that Assurance is it my dear Girl, That I sustain Life—But when will those sweet eyes of thine run over these Declarations?—how—& with whom

are they to be entrusted to us finds some expedient—I must wait—till the first evening I'm with You—when I shall present you with them as a better Picture of me than Cosway could do for you —have been dismally ill all day—owing to my course of Medicines wth are too strong & forcing for this gawky constitution of mine—I mend with them however—good God! how is it with you? —

June 12—I have returned from a delicious walk of Romance, my Bramine, which I am to tread a thousand times over with you swinging upon my arm—'tis to my Convent —& I have plucked up a score Bryars by the roots w^{ch} grew near the edge of the foot-way that they might not scratch or incommode you—had I been sure of your taking that walk with me the very next day I could not have been more serious in my employm^t—dear Enthusiasm!—thou bring'st things forward in a moment w^{ch} Time keeps for ages back—I have you ten times a day besides me—I talk to you Eliza for hours together—I take y^r Council—I hear your reasons—I admire you for them!—to this Magic of a warm (?) Mind I owe all that's worth living for during the state of our Trial—Every Trinctet you gave or exchanged wth me has its force—y^r Picture is Y^rself—all Sentiment Softness, & Truth—it speaks—it listens—'tis convinced—it resignes—Dearest Original! how like unto thee does it seem—& will seem—till thou makest it vanish by thy presence—I'm but so, so—but advancing in health—to meet you—to nurse you—to nourish you agst you come—for I fear You will not arrive but in a state that calls out to Yoric for support—Thou art Mistress, Eliza of all the powers he has to sooth & protect thee—for thou art Mistress of his heart, his affections, & his reason,—& beyond that, except a paltry purse, he has nothing worth giving thee—

June 13 —This has been a year of presents to me, my Bramine—How many presents have I rec^d from you in the first place?—L^a Spencer has loaded me with a grand Escritoire of 40 Guineas—& I am to receive this week a fourty Guinea present of a gold Snuff Box, as fine as Paris can fabricate one—with an Inscription on it more valuable than the Box itself—I have a present of a Portrait (which by the by I have immortalized in my Sentimental Journey) worth them both—I say nothing of a gold Stock buckle & buttons—though I rate them above rubies, because they were consecrated by the hand of Friendship, as she fitted them to me—I have a present of the Sculptures upon poor Ovid's Tomb, who died in exile tho' he wrote so well upon the Art of Love—These are in six beautiful Pictures executed on Marble at Rome—& these, Eliza, I keep sacred as Ornaments for y^r Cabinet, on condition I hang them up.—And last of all, I have had a present Eliza! this year of a Heart so finely set—with such rich materials—& Workmanship—that Nature must have have had the chief hand in it—If I am able to keep it—I shall be a rich Man—If I lose it—I shall be poor indeed—so poor! I shall stand begging at your gates.—But what can all these presents portend—That it will turn out a fortunate earnest of what is to be given me hereafter——

June 14.—I want you to comfort me, my dear Bramine —& reconcile my mind to 3 months misery—some days I think lightly of it—on others—my heart sinks down to the earth—but tis the last Trial of conjugal Misery—& I wish it was to begin this moment That it might run its period the faster—for sitting as I do, expecting sorrow—is suffering it—I am going to Hall to be philosophical with for a week or ten days on this point—but one hour with you would calm me more & furnish me with stronger supports under this weight upon my Spirits than all the

world put together—Heaven! to what distressful Encounters hast thou thought fit to expose me—& was it not that thou hast blessed me with a cheerfulness of disposition—& thrown an object in my Way That is to render that Sunshine perpetual—Thy dealings with me would be a mystery —

June 15 —From morning to night every mom^t of this day held in Bondage at my friend L^d ffaucenberg's—so have but a moment left to close the day as I do every one—with wishing thee a sweet night's rest—would I was at the feet of your bed—fanning breezes to you in y^r slumbers—Mark!—you will dream of me this night—& if it is not recorded in your Journal—I'll say, you could not recollect it the day following—adieu —

June 16 —My chaise is so large—so high—so long—so wide—so Crawford's like, that I am building a coach-house on purpose for it—do you dislike it for this gigantick size?—now I remember I heard you once say—You hated a small post chaise—w^{ch} you must know determined my Choice to this—because I hope to make you a present of it—& if you are squeamish I shall be as squeamish as You & return You all y^r presents—but one—w^{ch} I cannot part with and what that is—I defy you to guess I have bought a milch Asse this afternoon—& purpose to live by Suction to save the expenses of housekeeping—& have a score or two guineas in my purse next September — —

June 17 —I have brought y^r name Eliza! and Picture into my work—where they will remain, when you & I are at rest for ever—Some Annotator or explainer of my works in this place will take occasion to speak of the Friendship which subsisted so long & faithfully betwixt Yorick & the Lady he speaks of—Her Name he will tell the world was Draper—a Native of India—married there to a gentleman in the India service of that Name, who brought

her over to England for the recovery of her health in the year 65—where she continued to April the year 1767. It was about three months before her return to India That our Author's acquaintance & hers begun.—M^{rs} Draper had a great thirst for knowledge—was handsome—genteel—engaging—and of such gentle dispositions & so enlightened an understanding—That Yorick (whether she made much opposition is not known) from an acquaintance—soon became her Admirer—they caught fire at each other at the same time—& they would often say, without reserve to the world, & without any Idea of saying wrong in it, That their affections for each other were *unbounded* [*several words blacked out*].—M^r Draper dying in the year—This lady returned to England—& Yorick the year after becoming a Widower—They were married—& retiring to one of his Livings in Yorkshire where was a most romantic Situation—they lived & died happily—and are spoke of with honour in the parish to this day——

June 18.—How do you like the History of this couple, Eliza?—is it to your mind?—or shall it be written better some sentimental evening after your return—tis a rough sketch—but I could make it a pretty Picture as the outlines are just—we'll put our heads together & try what we can do. This last sheet has put it out of my power, ever to send you this Journal to India—I had been more guarded—but that you have often told me 'twas in vain to think of writing by ships which sail in March,—as you hoped to be on your return again by their arrival at Bombay.—If I can write a letter I will—but this Journal must be put into Eliza's hands by Yorick only—God grant you to read it soon.——

June 19.—I never was so well & alert as I find myself this day—tho' with a face as pale & clear as a Lady after her Lying-in, Yet you never saw me so young by 5 years—

If you do not leave Bombay soon—you'll find me as young as Y^rself—at this rate of going on — — Summoned from home adieu

June 20—I think, my dear Bramine, that nature is turned upside down—for Wives go to visit Husbands at greater perils & take longer Journeys to pay them this civility now a days out of ill will—than good Mine is flying post a Journey of a thousand miles—with as many miles to go back—merely to see how I do & whether I am fat or lean—& how far are you going to see your Helpmate—and at such hazards to Y^r Life, as few Wives & best affections w^d be able to surmount—But Duty & Submission, Eliza, govern thee—by what impulses my Rib is bent towards me—I have told you—& yet I w^d to God Draper but rec^d & treated you with half the courtesy & good nature—I wish you was with him—for the same reason I wish my Wife at Coxwold—That she might the sooner depart in peace—She is ill—of a Diarhea which she has from a weakness in her bowels ever since her paralytic Stroke—Travelling post in hot weather is not the best remedy for her—but my girl says—she is determined to venture—She wrote me word in Winter she w^d not leave France till her end approached—surely this journey is not prophetick! but 'twould invert the order of things on the other side of this Leaf—and what is to be on the next *Leaf*—The Fates, Eliza, only can tell us—rest satisfied

June 21—have left off all medecines—not caring to tear my frame to pieces with 'em—as I feel perfectly well—set out for Crasy Castle tomorrow morning—where I stay ten days—take my sentimental voyage—and this Journal with me, as certain as the two first wheels of my Chariot—I cannot go on without them—I long to see Y^r—I shall read it a thousand times over If I get it before your arrival—What w^d I now give for it—tho' I know there are

circumstances in it that will make my heart bleed & waste within me—but if all blows over—tis enough—we will not recount our sorrows but to shed tears of Joy over them—O Eliza! Eliza! Heaven not any Being it created never so possess'd a Man's heart—as thou possessest mine—use it kindly—Hussy—that is, eternally be true to it.—

June 22.—I've been as far as York today with no Soul with me in my Chaise, but y^r Picture—for it has a *Soul* I think—or something like one which has talked to me & been the best Company I ever took a Journey with (always excepting a Journey I once took with a friend of y^{rs} to Salt Hill, & Enfield Wash—The pleasure I had in those Journies have left *Impressions* upon my Mind which will last my Life—You may tell her as much when you see her—she will not take it ill—I set out early tomorrow morning to see M^r Hall—but take my Journal along with me.

June 24th.—As pleasant a Journey as I am capable of taking Eliza! without thee—Thou shalt take it with me when time & tide serve hereafter, & every other Journey which ever gave me pleasure shall be rolled over again with thee besides me.—Arno's Vale shall look gay again upon Eliza's visit—& the Companion of her Journey will grow young again as he sits upon her Banks with Eliza seated besides him. I have this & a thousand little parties of pleasure—& systems of living out of the comon high road of Life hourly working in my Fancy for you—there want only the *Dramatis Personae* for the performance—the play is wrote—the scenes are painted—& the curtain ready to be drawn up :—the whole Piece waits for thee my Eliza—

June 25.—In a course of continual visits & Invitations here—Bombay Lascelles dined here today—(his Wife yesterday brought to bed)—(he is a poor sorry soul!) but has taken a house two miles from Crasy Castle—What a stupid selfish unsentimental set of Beings are the bulk of

our Sex! by Heaven! not one man out of 50 informed with feelings—or endow'd either with heads or hearts able to possess & fill the mind of such a Being as thee with one vibration like its own—I never see or converse with one of my Sex—but I give this point a reflection—how would such a creature please my Bramine? I assure thee, Eliza, I have not been able to find one whom I thought could please You—the turn of Sentiment with which I left your Character possess'd—must improve hourly upon You—Truth, fidelity, honour & Love, mixed up with Delicacy, guarantee one another—& a taste so improved as Y^r by so delicious fare can never degenerate—I shall find you my Bramine if possible more valuable & lovely than when you first caught my esteem & Kindness for You—and tho' I see not this change—I give you so much credit for it—that at this moment my heart glows more warmly as I think of you—& I find myself more your Husband than Contracts can make us—I stay here till the 29th—had intended a longer stay—but much Company & Dissipation rob me of the only comfort my mind takes, w^{ch} is in retirement where I can think of you Eliza! and enjoy you quietly & without interruption—tis the way we must expect all that is to be had of *real* enjoyment in this vile world—which being miserable itself—seems so confederated ag^t the happiness of the Happy that they are forced to secure it in private—Variety must still be had,—& that, Eliza! & every thing wth it w^{ch} Yorick's sense or generosity has to furnish to one he loves so much as thee—need I tell thee—Thou wilt be as much a Mistress of—as thou art eternally of thy Yorick—adieu adieu —

June 26 —eleven at night—out all the day—dined with a large Party—shew'd y^r Picture from the fullness of my heart—highly admired—Alas! said I, did you but see the Original!—good night —

You & I, my Eliza, the room will not be too little for us—but we shall be *too big* for the Room.—

June 30.—Tis now a quarter of a year (wanting 3 days) since You sail'd from the Downs—in one month more you will be (I trust) at Madras—& there you will stay I suppose 2 long long months before you set out for Bombay. Tis there I shall want to hear from you most impatiently—because the most interesting letters must come from my Eliza when she is there—at present I can hear of your health, & though that of all Acc^{ts} affects me most—yet still I have hopes taking their rise from that—& those are—what Impression you can make upon M^r Draper towards setting you at Liberty—& leaving you to pursue the best measures for y^r preservation—and those are points I would go to Aleppo to know certainly: I have been possessed all this day & night with an opinion That Draper will change his behaviour totally towards you—That he will grow friendly & caressing—and as he knows your Nature is easily to be won by gentleness he will practise to turn you from your purpose of quitting him—In short when it comes to the point of y^r going from him to England it will have so much the face if not the reality of an alienation on y^r side from India for ever, as a place you cannot live at—that he will part with you by no means he can prevent—You will be cajoled, my dear Eliza, thus out of your Life—but what serves it to write this, unless means can be found for You to read it—If you come not I will take the safest cautions to have it got to you—& risk everything rather than you should not know how much I think of you.—& how much stronger hold you have got of me than ever.—Dillon has obtained his fair Indian—& has this post wrote a kind Letter of enquiry after Yorick & his Bramine—he is a good soul—& interests himself much in our fate—I have wrote him a whole sheet

of paper ab' us—it ought to have been copied into this Journal—but the uncertainty of y^r ever reading it makes me omit that with a thousand other things, which when we meet shall beguile us of many a long winter's night — *those precious Nights!* — my Eliza! — You rate them as high as I do—& look back upon the manner the hours glided over our heads in them with the same Interest & Delight as the Man you *spent them with*—They are all that remains to us except the *Expectation* of their return—the space between is a dismal void—full of doubts, suspence—Heaven & its kindest Spirits, my dear, rest over y^r thoughts by day & free them from disturbance at night—adieu, adieu, Eliza! — I have got over this month, so farewell to it & the sorrows it has brought with it—the next month I prophecy will be worse —

July 1 — But who can foretell what a month may produce—Eliza—I have no less than seven different chances—not one of w^{ch} is improbable—& any one of w^{ch} would set me much at Liberty—& some of em render me completely happy, as they would facilitate & open the road to thee—what these chances are I leave thee to conjecture, my Eliza,—some of them you cannot divine—tho' I once hinted them to you—but these are pecuniary chances arising out of my Prebend—& so not likely to stick in thy brain—nor could they occupy mine a moment but on thy acc^t

I hope before I meet thee Eliza, on the Beach, to have every thing planned that depends on me properly—& for what depends on him who orders every Event for us, to him I leave & trust it—We shall be happy at last I know—tis the corner stone of all my Castles & tis all I bargain for I am perfectly recovered—or more than recovered—for never did I feel such Indications of health & strenght and promptness of mind—notwithstanding the cloud hanging over me of a Visit & all its tormenting consequences—

June 27.—Ten in the morning, with my Snuff open at the top of this sheet,—& your gentle sweet face opposite to mine & saying “what I write will be cordially read”—possibly you may be precisely engaged at this very hour the same way—and telling me some interesting Story ab^t your health, y^r sufferings—y^r heart aches—and other sensations w^{ch} friendship, absence and uncertainty create within you. for my own part my dear Eliza, I am a prey to every thing in its turn—& was it not for that sweet clew of hope w^{ch} is perpetual opening me a way which is to lead me to thee through all this Labyrinth—was it not for this, my Eliza! how could I find rest for this bewildered heart of mine?—I sh^d wait for you till September came—and if you did not arrive with it—sh^d sicken & die.—but I will live for thee—so count me Immortal—3 India Men arrived within ten days—will none of em bring me Tidings of You?—but I am foolish—but ever thine—my dear, dear Bramine.——

June 28.—O what a tormenting night have my dreams led me a^{bt} you, Eliza—M^{rs} Draper, a Widow!—with a hand at Liberty to give! and gave it to another! She told me I must acquiesce it could not be otherwise. Acquiesce, cried I waking in agonies—God be praised cried I, tis a dream—fell asleep after—dream’d You was married to the Captain of the Ship—I waked in a fever—but twas the Fever in my blood which brought on this painful chain of Ideas—for I am ill today—& for want of more cheary Ideas I torment my Eliza with these—whose Sensibility will suffer if Yorick could but dream of her Infidelity! & I suffer, Eliza, in my turn to think myself at pres^t little better than an old Woman or a Dreamer of Dreams in the Scripture language.

I am going to ride myself into better health & better fancies with Hall whose Castle lyes near the Sea. We have a Beach as even as a mirrour of 5 miles in length before it,

where we daily run races in our Chaises, with one wheel in the sea & the other in the sand—O Eliza with what fresh ardour & impatience when I'm viewing this element do I sigh for thy return—But I need no mementos of my Destitution & misery for want of thee—I carry them about me, & shall not lay them down (for I worship & Idolize these tender sorrows) till I meet thee upon the Beach & present the handkerchiefs stained with blood w^{ch} broke out from my heart upon y^r departure—This token of what I felt at that crisis, Eliza, shall never never be washed out Adieu my dear Wife—you are still mine—notwithstanding all the Dreams & Dreamers in the world—M^{rs} Lascelles dined with us—I have to tell you a conversation—I will not write it——

June 29—am got home from Hall's—to Coxwoud—O tis a delicious retreat! both from its beauty & air of Solitude, & so sweetly does every thing ab^t it invite your mind to rest from its labours & be at peace with itself & the world—That tis the only place Eliza I could live in at this juncture—I hope one day You will like it as much as y^r Bramine—It shall be decorated & made more worthy of you by the time Fate encourages me to look for you—I have made you a sweet Sitting-room (as I told you already)—& am projecting a good bed-chamber adjoining it, with a pretty Dressing-room for You which connects them together—and when they are finished will be as sweet a set of romantic apartments, as you ever beheld—the sleeping room will be very large—The dressing room thro which you pass into your Temple will be small—but big enough to hold a Dressing Table, a couple of chairs, with room for y^r Nymph to stand at her ease both behind and on either side of you—wth spare room to hang a dozen petticoats, gowns, &c—and shelves for as many Bandoxes—Y^r little Temple I have described—and what it will hold—but if it ever holds

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Hall has written an affecting little poem upon it—the next time I see him I will get it & transcribe it in this Journal for you. . . . He has persuaded me to trust her with no more than fifteen hundred pounds into France—'twil purchase 150 p^d a year—& to let the rest come annually from myself. the advice is wise enough, If I can get her off with it—I'll summon up the Husband a little (if I can) & keep the 500 p^d remaining for emergencies—who knows Eliza, what sort of Emergencies may cry out for it—I conceive some—& you Eliza are not backward in conception—so may conceive others *I wish I was in Arno's Vale!*

July 2nd.—But am in the Vale of Cowould & wish you saw in how princely a manner I live in it—tis a Land of Plenty—I sit down alone to Venison, fish or wild fowl, or a couple of fowls—with curds & strawberries & cream and all the simple clean plenty w^{ch} a rich vally can produce—with a Bottle of wine on my right hand (as in Bond Street) to drink y^r health—I have a hundred hens & chickens about my yard—& not a parishioner catches a hare a rabbit or a trout but he brings me an offering—In short tis a golden vally—& will be the golden age when you govern the rural feast my Bramine, & are the Mistress of my table, & spread it with elegance and that natural grace & bounty wth w^{ch} heaven has distinguished You. . . . Time goes on slowly—every thing stands still—hours seem days & days seem years whilst you lengthen the distance between us—from Madras to Bombay—I shall think it shortening—and then desire & expectation will be upon the rack again—Come—Come—

July 3^d.—Hail! Hail! my dear Eliza—I steal something every day from my Sentimental Journey—to obey a more sentimental impulse in writing to you—& giving you the present Picture of myself—my wishes—my Love—my

Sincerity—my hopes—my fears Tell me have I varied in any one Lineament from the first Sitting—to this last—have I been less warm—less tender & affectionate than you expected or could have wished in any one of em—or however varied in the expressions of what I was & what I felt have I not still presented the same Air and face towards thee?—take it as a sample of what I ever shall be—My dear Bramine—& that is—such as my honour, my Engagements, & promises & desires, have fix'd me—I want you to be on the other side of my little table, to hear how sweetly y^r voice will be in unison with all this—I want to hear what you have to say to Y^r Yorick upon this test—what heavenly Consolation w^d drop from your lips—& how pathetically you w^d enforce y^r Truth & Love upon my heart to free it from every aching doubt—Doubt! did I say—but I have none—and as soon w^d I doubt the Scripture I have preached on—as question thy promises or suppose one Thought in thy heart during thy absence from me, unworthy of my Eliza—for if thou wert false, my Bramine—the whole world—and Nature itself are lyars—and I shall trust to nothing this side of heaven—but turn aside from all commerce with expectation, & go quietly on my way alone towards a state where no disappointments can follow me—you are grieved when I talk thus, it implies what does not exist in either of us—so cross it out if thou wilt—or leave it as a part of the Picture of a heart that again Languishes for Possession & is disturbed at every Idea of its uncertainty—So heaven bless thee—and ballance thy passions better than I have power to regulate mine—farewel my dear Girl—I sit in dread of tomorrow's post which is to bring me an Acc^t when *Madame* is to arrive — —

July 4th—Hear nothing of her—so am tortured from post to post for I want to know certainly *the day & hour of this*

Juagment. She is moreover ill as my Lydia writes me word—& I'm impatient to know whether tis that or what other Cause detains her & keeps me in this vile state of Ignorance—I'm pitied by every Soul in proportion as her Character is detested—& her errand known—she is coming every one says to flea from Yorick or slay him—& I am spirited up by every friend I have to sell my Life dear & fight valiantly in defence both of my property & my Life—Now my Maxim Eliza is quietly in three—Spare my Life & take all I have—If she is not content to decamp with that—One kingdom shall not hold us—for if she will not betake herself to France—I will. but these I verily (?) believe my fears & nothing more—for she will be as impatient to quit England as I could wish her—but of this, you will know more before I have gone through this months Journal.—I get 2000 pounds for my estate—that is I had the offer this morning of it—& think tis enough.—when that is gone—I will begin saving for thee—but in saving myself for thee That & every other kind act is implied.

—get on slowly with my work—but my head is too full of other matters—yet will I finish it before I see London—for I am of too scrupulous honour to break faith with the world—great Authors make no scruple of it—but if they are great Authors I'm sure they are little Men.—I'm sure also of another point which concerns Y^rself—& that is Eliza, that you shall never find me one hair breadth a less Man than you [*black'd out*]
—farewell—I love thee eternally.

July 5 —Two Letters from the South of France by this post by which by some fatality I find that not one of my Letters have got to them this month—This gives me concern—because it has the aspect of an unseasonable unkindness in me—to take no notice of what has the appearance at least of a civility in desiring to pay me a Visit—my daughter

besides has not deserved it of me—& tho' her Mother has, I w^d not ungenerously take that opportunity which would most overwhelm her to give any mark of my resentment—I have besides long since forgiven her—& am the more inclined now as she proposes a plan by which I shall never more be disquieted—in these two last she renews her request to have leave to live where she has transferr'd her fortune—& purposes with my leave, she says, to end her days in the South of France—to all which I have just been writing her a Letter of Consolation & good will—& to crown my professions entreat her to take post with my girl to be here time enough to enjoy York races—& so having done my duty to them—I continue waiting to do it to thee Eliza who art the Woman of my heart & for whom I am ordering & planning this & every Thing else—be assured my Bramine that ere everything is ripe for our Drama I shall work hard to fit out & decorate a little Theatre for us to act on—but not before a crowded House—no, Eliza—it shall be as secluded as the Elysian fields—retirement is the nurse of Love & kindness—& I will Woo & caress thee in it in such sort that every thicket & grotto we pass by shall solicit the remembrance of the mutual pledges We have exchanged of Affection with one another—Oh! these expectations make me sigh as I recite them—& many a heartfelt Interjection do they cost me as I saunter alone in the tracks we are to tread together hereafter—still I think thy heart is with me—& whilst I think so, I prefer it to all the Society this world can offer—& tis in truth my dear owing to this—That tho' I've rec^d half a dozen Letters pressing me to join my friends at Scarborough—that I've found pretences not to quit You *here* & sacrifice the many sweet Occasions I have of giving my thoughts up to You—for Company I cannot relish *since* I have tasted my dear Girl the sweets of thine — — —

July 6.—Three long months & three long days are passed & gone since my Eliza sighed on taking her Leave of Albion's Cliffs, & of all in Albion which was dear to her—How oft have I smarted at the Idea of that last longing look by w^{ch} thou badest adieu to all thy heart suffered at that dismal Crisis—'twas the Separation of Soul & Body—& equal to nothing but what passes at that tremendous moment, & like it in one consequence that thou art in another World; where I w^d give a world, to follow thee—for this I shall write in a few days to our dear friend M^{rs} James—she may have possibly heard a single syllable or two ab^t you—but it cannot be; the same must have been directed towards Yorick's ear, to whom you w^d have wrote the name of *Eliza*, had there been no time for more. I w^d almost now compound with Fate—& was I only sure Eliza only breath'd—I w^d thank heaven & acquiesce. I kiss your Picture—your Shawl—& every trinket I exchanged with You—every day I live—alas! I shall soon be debarr'd of that—in a fortnight I must lock them up & clasp my seal & Y^{rs} upon them in the most secret Cabinet of my Bureau—You may divine the reason, Eliza! adieu—adieu!

July 7.—But not yet—for I will find means to write to you every night whilst my people are here—if I sit up till midnight, till they are asleep—I should not dare to face you if I was worse than my word in the smallest Item—& this Journal I promised you Eliza should be kept without a chasm of a day in it—had I my time to myself & nothing to do but to gratify my propensity, I s^{hd} write from sunrise to sunset to thee—But a Book to write—a Wife to receive & make Treaties with—an estate to sell—a Parish to superintend—and a disquieted heart perpetually to reason with, are eternal calls upon me—& yet I have you more in my mind than ever—and in proportion as I am thus torn

Companion & friend for whom I make it is fled from me, & when she returns to me again, Heaven who first brought us together, best knows—When that hour is foreknown what a Paradise will I plant for thee—till then I walk as Adam did whilst there was no help-meet found for it, & could almost wish a day's sleep would come upon me till that Moment when I can say as he did "*Behold the Woman Thou hast given me for Wife.*" She shall be called 'La Bramine.' Indeed, Indeed Eliza! my life will be little better than a dream, till we approach nearer to each other—I live scarce conscious of my existence—or as if I wanted a vital part & could not live above a few hours. & yet I live & live & live on for thy sake & the sake of thy truth to me which I measure by my own—& I fight agst every evil & every danger that I may be able to support & shelter thee from danger & evil also.—upon my word dear Girl, thou owest me much—but tis cruel to dun thee when thou art not in a condition to pay—I think Eliza has not run off in her Yorick's debt——

July 10.—I cannot suffer you to be longer on the Water—in 10 days time you shall be at Madrass—the element rolls in my head as much as yours, & I am sick at the sight & smell of it—for all this my Eliza I feel in Imagination & so strongly, I can bear it no longer—on the 20th therefore Ins^t I begin to write to you as a terrestrial Being—I must deceive myself—& think so I will, notwithstanding all that Lascelles has told me—but there is no truth in him.—I have just kissed y^r Picture—even that soothes many an anxiety—I have found out the Body is too little for the Head—it shall not be rectified, till I sit by the Original & direct the Painter's pencil. And that done will take a scamper to *Enfield* & see y^r dear Children—if you tire by the way there are *one or two* places to rest at.—I never stand out. God bless thee. I am thine as *ever*.

July 11 —Sooth me—calm me—pour thy healing balm Eliza into the sorest of hearts—I'm pierced with the Ingratitude & unquiet Spirit of a restless unreasonable Wife whom neither gentleness or generosity can conquer—She has now entered upon a new plan of waging War with me a thousand miles off—thrice a week this last month has the quietest man under heaven been outraged by her Letters—I have offered to give her every shilling I was worth except my preferment, to be let alone & left in peace by her—Bad Woman! nothing must now purchase this unless I borrow 400 p^{ds} to give her & carry into france—I w^d perish first, my Eliza! ere I would give her a shilling of another man's, which I must do if I give her a shilling more than I am worth—How I feel the want of thee, my Bramine—my generous unworldly honest creature—I shall die for want of thee for a thousand reasons—every emergency & every Sorrow each day brings along with it tells me what a Treasure I am bereft of—whilst I want thy friendship & Love to keep my head up from sinking—God's will be done But I think she will send me to my grave—she will now keep me in torture till the end of September—& writes me word today, she will delay her Journey two months beyond her first intention—it keeps me in eternal suspense all the while—for she will come unawares at last upon me—& then adieu to the dear Sweet's of my retirement

How cruelly are our Lots drawn my dear,—both made for happiness—& neither of us made to taste it In feeling so acutely for my own disappointment I drop blood for thine—I call thee in to my Aid—& thou wantest mine as much—Were we together we should recover—but never never till then *nor by any other recipe*

July 12 —Am ill all day with the Impressions of Yesterday's account—can neither eat nor drink nor sit still

to write or read—I walk like a disturbed Spirit ab^r my garden calling upon heaven & thee to come to my succour.—Couldst thou but write one word to me it would be worth the world to me—my friends write me millions—& every one invites me to flee from my Solitude & come to them—I obey the commands of my friend Hall who has sent over on purpose to fetch me—or he will come himself for me—so I set off tomorrow morning to take Sanctuary in Crasy Castle—The newspapers have sent me there already by putting in the following paragraph.

“We hear from Yorkshire That Skelton Castle is the present Rendezvous of the most brilliant Wits of the Age—the admired Author of *Tristram*, M^r Garrick &c. being there, & M^r Coleman & many other men of Wit & Learning being every day expected”—when I get there, w^{ch} will be tomorrow night my Eliza will hear from her Yorick—her Yorick who loves her more than ever.

July 13.—Skelton Castle. . . . Your Picture has gone round the table after supper—& your health after it, my invaluable friend!—even the Ladies who hate grace in another seemed struck with it in You—but alas! you are as a dead person—& Justice (as in all such cases) is paid you in course—when thou returnest it will be rendered more sparingly—but I’ll make up all deficiencies by honouring you more than ever Woman was honoured by man—every good quality that ever good heart possessed, thou possessest my dear Girl, & so sovereignly does thy temper & sweet sociability, which harmonize all thy other properties make me thine, that whilst thou art true to thyself & thy Bramin—he thinks thee worth a world—& would give a world was he Master of it for the undisturbed possession of thee—Time & Chance are busy throwing this Die for me—a fortunate Cast, or two, at the most, makes our fortune & gives us each other—& then for the world—I w^{ll} not give a pinch of

snuff—Do take care of thyself—keep this prospect before thy eyes—have a view to it in all y^r transactions, Eliza,—In a word Remember You are Mine—and stand answerable for all you say & do to me—I govern myself by the same rule—& such a History of myself can I lay before you as shall create no blushes but those of pleasure—tis midnight—and so sweet sleep to thee the remaining hours of it I am more thine my dear Eliza! than ever—but that cannot be—

July 14—Dining & feasting all day at M^r Turner's—his Lady, a fine Woman herself, is in love with your Picture—O my dear Lady cried I, did you but know the Original—but what is she to you, Tristram?—nothing, but that I am in Love with her—etceetera — — — said she—No I have given over dashes—replied I — — I verily think my Eliza I shall get this Picture set, so as to wear it as I at first proposed—about my neck—I do not like the place tis in—it shall be nearer my heart—Thou art ever in its centre—good night—

July 15—From home (Skelton Castle) from 8 in the morning till late at supper—I seldom have put thee so off my dear Girl—& yet tomorrow will be as bad

July 16—for M^r Hall has this Day left his Crasy Castle to come & sojourn with me at Shandy Hall for a few days—for so they have long christened our retired Cottages—we are just arrived at it & whilst he is admiring the premises—I have stole away to converse a few minutes with thee and in thy own dressing-room—for I make every thing thine & call it so beforehand that thou art to be mistress of hereafter The *Hereafter* Eliza is but a melancholly term—but the certainty of its coming to us brightens it up Pray do not forget my prophecy in the Dedication of the Almanack—I have the utmost faith in it myself—but by whose impulse my mind was struck with 3 years, heaven

whom I believe its author best knows—but I shall see your face before—but that I leave to you—& to the Influence such a Being must have over all inferior ones—We are going to dine with the Arch Bishop tomorrow—& from thence to Harrogate for three days, whilst thou dear Soul art pent up in a sultry nastiness—without variety or change of face or conversation.—Thou shalt have enough of both when I cater for thy happiness Eliza—& if an affectionate husband & 400 p^{ds} a year in a sweeter vally than that of Jehosophat will do—less thou shalt never have—but I hope more—& were it millions tis the same—twould be laid at thy feet—Hall has come in in raptures with every thing—& so I shut up my Journal for today and tomorrow for I shall not be able to open it where I go. Adieu my dear Girl——

18 —Was yesterday all the day with our A. Bishop — — this good Prelate who is one of our most refined Wits & the most of a gentleman of our order—oppresses me with his kindness—he shews in his treatment of me what he told me on taking my Leave—that he loves me & has a high Value for me—his chaplains tell me he is perpetually talking of me—& has such an opinion of my head & heart that he begs to stand Godfather for my next Literary production—so has done me the hon^r of putting his name on a List which I am most proud of because my Eliza's name is on it—I have just a moment to scrawl this to thee, being at York—where I want to be employ'd in taking you a little house, where the prophet may be accommodated with a *Chamber in the Wall apart with a stool & a Candlestick.*” where his soul can be at rest from the distractions of the world, & lean only upon his kind hostesse, & repose all his cares & melt them *along with hers* in her sympathetic bosom.

July 19.—Harrogate Spaws.—drinking the waters here

till the 26th—to no effect, but a cold dislike to every one of your sex—I did nothing but make comparisons betwixt thee my Eliza & every Woman I saw and talk'd to—thou hast made me so unfit for every one else—that I am thine as much from necessity as Love—I am thine by a thousand sweet ties, the least of which shall never be relaxed—be assured my dear Bramine of this—& repay me in so doing the confidence I repose in thee—Y^r Absence, Y^r distresses, your sufferings, your conflicts all make me rely but the more upon that fund in you w^{ch} is able to sustain so much weight—Providence I know will relieve you from one part of it—& it shall be the pleasure of my days to ease my dear friend of the other—I love thee Eliza, more than the heart of Man ever loved Woman's—I even love thee more than I did the day thou badest me farewell!—Farewell!—Farewell! to thee again—I'm going from hence to York Races

July 27 —Arrived at York—where I had not been two hours before my heart was overset with a pleasure w^{ch} beggared ever other that fate could give me—save thyself—It was thy dear Packets from Iago—I cannot give vent to all the emotions I felt even before I opened them—for I knew thy hand—& my seal—which was only in thy possession—O tis from my Eliza, said I—I instantly shut the door of my Bedchamber & ordered myself to be denied—& spent the whole evening, & till dinner the next day, in reading over & over again the most interesting Acc^t & the most endearing one that ever tried the tenderness of Man—I read & wept—and wept & read till I was blind—then grew sick & went to bed—& in an hour called again for the Candle—to read it once more—as for my dear Girl's pains & her dangers I cannot write about them—because I cannot write my feelings or express them any how to my mind—O Eliza! but I will talk them over with thee with a sympathy that shall woo thee so much better than I have ever done—

That we will both be gainers in the end—‘*I’ll love thee for the dangers thou hast past*’—and thy affection shall go hand in hand with me because I’ll pity thee as no man ever pitied Woman—but Love like mine is never satisfied—else your 2nd Letter from Iago—is a Letter so warm, so simple, so tender! I defy the world to produce such another—by all that’s kind & gracious! I will entreat thee Eliza so kindly—that thou shalt say, [*erasure*] I merit much of it—nay all—for my merit to thee is my truth.

I now want to have this week of nonsensical festivity over—that I may get back with thy Picture w^{ch} I ever carry ab^t me—to my retreat & to Cordelia—when the days of our afflictions are over, I oft amuse my fancy with an Idea, that thou wilt come down to me by stealth, [*erasure*] & hearing where I have walked out to—surprise me some sweet moonshiney Night at Cordelia’s grave, & catch me in thy arms over it—O my Bramin! my Bramin!—

July 31.—am tired to death with the hurrying pleasures of these Races—I want still & *silent* ones—so return home tomorrow in search of them—I shall find them as I sit contemplating over thy passive picture, sweet Shadow of what is to come! for tis all I can now grasp—first & best of Womankind! remember me, as I remember thee—tis asking a great deal my Bramine! but I cannot be satisfied with less—farewell—fare—happy till Fate will let me cherish thee myself.—O my Eliza! thou writest to me with an angel’s pen—& thou wouldst win me by thy Letters, had I never seen thy face or known thy heart.

Augst 1.—What a sad Story thou hast told me of thy sufferings & Despondences from S^t Iago, till thy meeting with the Dutch ship—twas a sympathy above tears—I trembled every nerve as I went from line to line—& every moment the Acc^t comes across me—I suffer all I felt, over & over again—will providence suffer all this anguish

without end—& without pity?—“*it no can be*”—I am tried my dear Bramine in the furnace of Affliction as much as thou—by the time we meet we shall be fit only for each other—& should cast away upon any other Harbour

Aug^d 2—my wife [*line and a half of erasures*] uses me most unmercifully—every soul advises me to fly from her—but where can I fly if I fly not to thee? The Bishop of Cork & Ross has made me great offers in Ireland—but I will take no step without thee—and till heaven opens us some track—He is the best of feeling tender hearted men—knows our Story—sends You his blessing—& says if the Ship you return in touches at Cork (w^{ch} many India Men do)—he will take you to his Palace till he can send for me to join you—he only hopes he says, to join us together for ever—but more of this good man & his attachment to me—hereafter

And oft a couple of Ladies in the family &c &c¹

Aug^d 3^d—I have had an offer of exchanging two pieces of preferment I hold here (but sweet Cordelia's Parish is not one of them) for a Living of 350 p^{as} a year in Surry ab^t 30 miles from London—& retaining Coxwold & my Prebendaryship—w^{ch} are half as much more—the Country also is sweet—but I will not—I cannot take any step unless I had thee my Eliza for whose sake I live to consult with—& till the road is open for me as my heart wishes to advance—with thy sweet light Burden in my Arms I could get up fast the hill of Preferment if I chose it—but without thee I feel Lifeless—and if a Mitre was offered me I would not have it till I could have thee too, to make it sit easy upon my brow—I want kindly to smooth thine, & not only wipe away the tears but dry up the Source of them for ever

Aug^d 4—Hurried backwards & forwards ab^t the arrival

¹ This line is evidently an after interpolation, and seems to have been introduced in the wrong place

of Madame this whole week—& then farewell I fear to this Journal—till I get up to London—& can pursue it as I wish—at present all I can write would be but the History of my miserable feelings—She will be ever present—& if I take up my plea for thee—something will jaw [? jar] within me as I do it—that I must lay it down again—I will give you one gen^l Acc^t of all my sufferings together—but not in Journals—I shall set my wounds a-bleeding every day afresh by it—& the Story cannot be too short—so worthiest & best, kindest & affectionate of Souls farewell—every Moment will I have thee present & sooth my sufferings with the looks my fancy shall cloath thee in—Thou shalt lye down & rise up with me—ab^t my bed & ab^t my paths, & shalt see out all my ways.—adieu—adieu—& remember one eternal truth My dear Bramine, w^{ch} is not the worse because I have told it thee a thousand times before—That I am thine—& thine only & for ever

L. STERNE.

Nov. 1st.—All my dearest Eliza has turnd out more favourable than my hopes—M^{rs} S—— & my dear Girl have been 2 months with me & they have this day left me to go to spend the Winter at York, after having settled every thing to their hearts content—M^{rs} Sterne retires into france whence she purposes not to stir till her death—& never, has she vowed, will she give me another sorrowful or discontented hour—I have conquered her as I w^d every one else by humanity and Generosity—& she leaves me more than half in Love with me—she goes into the South of france her health being insupportable in England—& her age as she now confesses ten years more than I thought, b the edge of sixty—so God bless—& make the rema her life happy—in order to w^{ch} I am to remit hundred guineas a year—and give my dear

thousand p^ds—w^{ch} wth all joy I agree to,—but tis to be sunk into an annuity in the french Loans——

——And now Eliza ! Let me talk to thee—But what can I say, what can I write—But the Yearnings of heart wasted with looking & wishing for thy Return—Return—Return ! my dear Eliza ! May heaven smooth the Way for thee to send thee safely to us, & Soj[ourn] for Ever

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